

# MODERN LEADERS ON RELIGION



JOHN CAIRD

FRIEDRICH PAULSEN

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

WILLIAM JAMES

LEO TOLSTOY

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

HENRY BERGSON

A. N. WHITEHEAD

MAHATMA GANDHI

ALBERT EINSTEIN

ALDOUS HUXLEY

S. RADHAKRISHNAN



SRIMAT PURAGRA PARAMPANTHI



In this book for the first time the author presents in a comprehensive, concise and lucid manner the views on religion, God, ethics, morality and allied topics, of the twelve modern geniuses. The selection is unique, for among them there are social thinker, poet, scientist, mathematician, theologian, and politician of world fame. The cumulative result has been a grand, synthetic re-interpretation of religion against the background of modern need and understanding and a profoundly moving plea for revival of true spiritual values on the basis of the prophetic vision and teachings of the master-minds of this creative era.

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SRINIVASA PURAN

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*By*  
**SRIMAT**  
**PURAGRA PARAMPANTHI**

**1957**



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**THIS BOOK  
IS  
MOST RESPECTFULLY  
DEDICATED  
TO  
ALL  
THE  
RELIGIOUS PEOPLE  
OF  
THE  
WORLD**





Vice-President  
India  
New Delhi  
20 November, 56.

Dear Swamiji,\*

Thank you for your letter of the 15th inst.

I am glad to know that you are now at work on a book to be called "Modern Geniuses on Religion." I think the word 'geniuses' may be replaced by 'leaders.'

I have written so much about religion and its place in modern life already.


I hope you will be able to complete your work.  
With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely  
(Sd) S. Radhakrishnan.

Swami Puragra Parampanthi,  
"Viraj", Dr. Basu's Road,  
Dibrugarh, Assam.

\*The author is a Hindu monk.

## PREFACE



In this book I have endeavoured to outline the views on religion of John Caird, Friedrich Paulsen, Swami Vivekananda, William James, Leo Tolstoy, Rabindranath Tagore, Henry Bergson, A. N. Whitehead, Mahatma Gandhi, Albert Einstein, Aldous Huxley and S. Radhakrishnan. I have selected these twelve modern geniuses to present a summary of their views on religion for several reasons. Firstly, the selection is representative; among them there are philosopher, poet, theologian, politician, mathematician, social thinker and scientist. Secondly, these modern leaders have given considerable attention and thought to religion and religious problems; they are more or less rational idealists representing and reflecting the views and convictions of the majority of religious people of the world today. Thirdly, their views are neither dogmatic nor parochial but have universal appeal and significance; they uphold and explain the universal fundamentals of religion, which are to be found in all religions.

I have written this book firstly, to show that these modern leaders who have been neither superstitious nor ignorant, neither irrational nor biased by any pre-orientation and who symbolise the profound wisdom and vision, the phenomenal progress of the age and evolution of the spirit of man have felt deeply the need, value and cogency of religion in modern times. Secondly, to illustrate from their writings that the harmonious development of man, which the secular forces and progress have failed to achieve and the elimination of evils and ills which they have failed to remove, are possible only when both science and secular



forces and religion fully co-operate and co-exist. Thirdly, to help the common modern man by the exposition of these views on religion and allied topics to have a clear picture of what religion truly is and what it truly is not. The religious views of such exceptional persons always throw a flood of light on the mystery of religion and help us all to understand the perspective, nature, content, aim and purpose of all religions of the world.

I am aware that there are other modern leaders belonging to various lands, who have discussed religion from various view-points and their views too deserve serious study and exposition. Non-inclusion of their views in this work is mainly due to my insufficiency of knowledge and the meagreness of space. If, however, this volume is kindly received by the press and the public, I may venture to write another volume containing their concepts. I may mention here that I wrote a letter to Dr. Bertrand Russell requesting him to let me have his ideas on religion. He very kindly replied saying that I could print in full or part his article entitled *A Free Man's Worship* which expresses his views on religion. So I have quoted in the introductory chapter a few revealing passages from the same.

My treatment of the subject-matter is brief and simple; my earnest effort has been to present in broad outlines main concepts as concisely, as coherently and comprehensively as possible. I have tried my best not to refer directly to any religion by name; I have discussed the merits and demerits of religion in general terms in the light of the views of the persons concerned. Such a vast and difficult venture as this is bound to remain fragmentary and incomplete; it is quite likely that the mistakes have crept in and exposition is sometimes faulty and unconvincing. Hence all the responsibilities like my errors are my own and I am



fully conscious of my limitations. I am open to suggestions and corrections which the learned reader may be pleased to advance. This book, at the best, can serve as an incomplete introduction to the profound works of these modern thinkers. Therefore, I would request the reader to go through the works in order to realise fully and correctly the significance, importance and far-reaching consequences of their thoughts on religion in modern times. I have written this book in spite of heavy odds that have stood in my way because my wavering faith in myself is sustained by my firm belief in the need, truth, beauty and goodness of religion in this age of spiritual vacuum and moral decay.

The first chapter is introductory and contains some of my views on religion and allied subjects. A bibliography of the works consulted and quoted in writing the book has been appended. Books starred are recommended for further study.

Lastly, I record my thanks and gratitude to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan for the naming of the book. At first I had decided to call this book "Modern Geniuses On Religion", but afterwards in response to my letter of enquiry Dr. S. Radhakrishnan kindly suggested the name which the book now bears.

"Viraj"

Dibrugarh, Assam  
May, 1957.

PURAGRA PARAMPANTHI.





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the Editors of the esteemed Vedanta Kesari for their ready permission to reproduce my articles on Swami Vivekananda, Albert Einstein and William James, which were first published in the pages of the said publication in the issues of January, November '53 and September '55 respectively. The articles have been considerably enlarged and completely re-written to form the three chapters of this book.

I thank all the authors and publishers of the books I have consulted and quoted in writing the volume.

I thank all my friends and well-wishers without whose good-wishes and material help the work would not have seen the light of the day. I thank the scholars who have kindly gone through the book in manuscript and typescript and have advanced valuable suggestions for my benefit.



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OF THE HINDU RELIGION

The Hindu religion is one of the oldest and most ancient religions of the world. It is a religion of peace and love, and it is a religion of wisdom and knowledge. It is a religion that has been practiced for thousands of years, and it is a religion that has been the source of inspiration and guidance for millions of people. The Hindu religion is a religion of harmony and unity, and it is a religion that has been the source of strength and courage for millions of people. It is a religion that has been the source of hope and faith for millions of people, and it is a religion that has been the source of joy and happiness for millions of people. The Hindu religion is a religion of peace and love, and it is a religion of wisdom and knowledge. It is a religion that has been practiced for thousands of years, and it is a religion that has been the source of inspiration and guidance for millions of people. The Hindu religion is a religion of harmony and unity, and it is a religion that has been the source of strength and courage for millions of people. It is a religion that has been the source of hope and faith for millions of people, and it is a religion that has been the source of joy and happiness for millions of people.

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## FOREWORD

The eternal truths are never spectacular or startlingly novel; they are as old as the hills and as patient as the mother earth. They do not dazzle like the flash of lightning—they grow in us like the silent dream, suffuse envelop and transform our being by the compelling magic of their simplicity—by the soothing suasion of their inherent, immortal worth. It is the supreme duty of every age to re-discover these cloud-veiled truths which symbolise the universal values of life, which like the cressets of hope and redemption twinkle from afar to lead humanity towards the ultimate destination.

Every age reaches its culmination in great individuals; these individuals have no splendour of the material—they possess the gentle vision of the abiding and the spiritual. They embody the finest fruits of the age because they stand nearest to the creative power and the perennial source of life which is the expression and justification of God. And they transmit the precious gifts of life and soul, culture and civilisation to the humanity at large. The success of human life lies in the realisation of values.

The eternal truths are the universal, spiritual values which form the highway to the brotherhood of mankind under the Fatherhood of God. One by one these great leaders stand before the conflict-torn humanity and give their unequivocal verdict in favour of these eternal values without which life will be a misnomer. There is profound urgency in their voice; there is commanding vision in their message which echoes the wisdom of the ages; there is invincible spirit of truth in their words and mankind which is on the verge of darkness will be saved if it listens to their call crying in the wilderness.

*Puragra Parampanthi.*





## CHAPTER I

### RELIGION AND THE MODERN WORLD



*The Modern Age—Its Harmful Aspects—Its Salutory Aspects—The Human Nature—Religion: Its Essence—Religion and Modern Man—Religion And Science—The Reformation Of Religion.*

"Only those scriptures, religions, philosophies which can be thus constantly renewed, relived, their stuff of permanent truth constantly reshaped and developed in the inner thought and spiritual experience of a developing humanity, continue to be of living importance to mankind. The rest remain as the monuments of the past but have no actual force or vital impulse for the future."

—Sri Aurobindo—

#### I

The modern age of science and reason is also the era of deep unrest and downfall of man. The impressive and rapid material successes of science have failed to usher in lasting peace, security and true physical and spiritual well-being of humanity. In the language of Albert Einstein we have today the perfection of means but the increasing confusion of ends.

The material basis of science has directed the human attention exclusively to things as opposed to values, to



factors real as opposed to things ideal and spiritual. The antithesis of things and values may be a false one if it is taken in a concrete way but in the realm of abstract thought it is capable of producing harmful influences. A. N. Whitehead observes that this misplaced emphasis has united with the abstractions of political economy and the result is that all thought connected with the social organisation is expressed in terms of material things and capital. In this way, he thinks, the ultimate values have been excluded from our social life and handed over to the clergy to be kept for Sundays.<sup>1</sup> R. H. Tawney also shows that the separation of the secular from the spiritual, the economics from religious influence spells disaster in the economic life of humanity.

The emphasis of science predominantly on things has given rise to the materialistic philosophy of life and science has come to symbolise the manifestation and realisation of the phenomenal quantity. That is why Jean-Paul Sartre writes—"....the universe of science is quantitative.... scientific matter represents in a way the realisation of quantity".<sup>2</sup> This tendency tends to advocate the cult of a fixed, given quantity of material and consequently of a fixed, given environment of finite dimension. The notions of such temper and way of life are thus directing the attention of mankind almost exclusively to the aspect for struggle for existence in a fixed environment. And the impact of such trend on social consciousness and conduct has been very unwholesome on the whole; this spirit invariably leads man towards struggle for existence, competition, class and military warfare, commercial antagonism between nations, gospels of hate, force and violence.

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1. Science and The Modern World, p. 203.

2. Literary and Philosophical Essays, p. 191.



The notion of a fixed environment involves a tendency for complete adaptation to surroundings and complete adaptation of this kind smacks of animality and the perpetual suspension of all progress and adventure. It is basically opposed to the plan and purpose of life whose aim should be the transformation of environment and not the enslavement to it. John Dewey says—"Complete adaptation to environment means death. The point in all response is desire to control the environment".<sup>3</sup> Science is unconsciously guiding all towards this pernicious goal. Echoing the above idea Alexis Carrel observes that the fundamental error of modern society is the separation of the quantity from the quality. He thinks that the Cartesian dualism of body and mind, of matter and spirit emphatically supported this division long ago and today the same fallacious tendency persists to isolate the material from the spiritual. This great blunder has led science to great victory and man to great degradation.<sup>4</sup>

Equally baneful is the doctrine of uniformity propagated by science; for it disregards the natural law of variety and distinction among the individuals. Differences are the essential conditions of all higher developments. Physical and spiritual adventures and wandering towards various directions are necessary for man's ascent in the scale of being. The law of being is the law of diversity and distinction; the law of machine is the law of rigid uniformity and standardisation. Bertrand Russell envisions two causes of psychological discontent in modern times; the first cause is the rapidity of change in material conditions and the second cause "is the increasing sub-

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3. Quoted by Will Durant in *The Story of Philosophy*, p. 447.

4. *Man, The Unknown*, pp. 294-295.



ordination of individuals to organisations".<sup>5</sup> Thus in the name of equality modern society tends to suppress individuality and free, creative faculties of man. This is the tragedy of the whole affair. Carrel observes—"In attempting to establish equality among men, we have suppressed individual peculiarities which are most useful.... The brutal materialism of our civilisation not only opposes the soaring intelligence, but also crushes the affective, the gentle, the weak, the lonely.....".<sup>6</sup>

The scientific inclination towards professionalism is proving harmful in the long run. Aldous Huxley holds that it stands ultimately for separateness and one-sided development. It leads to intra-specific competition which is very dangerous for the safety and well-being of entire humanity. He says—"For man competition is now predominantly intra-specific.....we are using our intelligence to adapt ourselves more and more effectively to the modern conditions of intra-specific competition. We are doing our best to develop a militaristic 'hypertely', to become, in other words, dangerously specialized in the art of killing our fellows".<sup>7</sup>

The age of science is characteristically the age of terrific transition; its main phenomenon is the rapid movement. The movement or change is always a criterion of progress provided it is always accompanied by enduring values and achievements. But change without permanent elements is a passage from nothing to nothing. We are not sure whether the protean movement of this era is sedulously accompanied by valuable contributions of lasting significance. Negatively science has been active and

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5. The Impact of Science on Society, p. 134.

6. Man, The Unknown, pp. 294-295.

7. Ends and Means, p. 262.



powerful enough to remove or at least extenuate the hold of traditional ideas and values—spiritual, ethical and intellectual, on the modern people at large. But from positive standpoint it has not been able to put forward new, edifying values and precepts to fulfil the demand created by the elimination of old values and dogmas. The result is that modern man has neither the consolation of old values nor the inspiration of new ones. John Dewey speaking about the inability of science to determine the relation pertaining to human beings says—"It is incapable of developing moral techniques which will also determine these relations, the split in modern culture goes so deep that not only democracy but all civilised values are doomed".<sup>8</sup>

The predilections of this age are preponderantly hedonistic and utilitarian in character; the age embodies the raging revolt of modern man against all traditional concepts and consequently the worship of spirit and religion has given way to the fanatical adoration and worship of reason and mammon. The speed and complexity have replaced old repose and simplicity; the eternal desire for physical security has usurped the bygone longing for spiritual peace and illumination. Today moral lapses receive scientific sanction; the sexual perversity is explained away; corruption and hypocrisy, diplomacy and suave unscrupulousness are tolerated as necessary assets of modern man in search for lucre and fame. Huxley pointing out the situation writes—".....they re-interpreted human life in terms of..... its lowest.....art thus satisfactorily disposed of, religion was next 'explained' in terms of sex. The moral conscience was abolished and 'amuse yourself' proclaimed as the sole categorical imperative".<sup>9</sup> Sporadic outbursts of violence

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8. *Freedom and Culture*, pp. 126-127.

9. *Jesting Pilate*, pp. 275-276.



and anger, indiscipline and excessiveness, abnormality and erratic fervour characterise the modern times. The conflicts—ideological or passionate are ever present under the shadow of impending war of atom or hydrogen bombs.

Today economic and political, intellectual and secular conditions are extremely mobile and they involve various problems. These conditions evolve out of the industrial civilisation; these varying forces tend to change with new inventions and discoveries, new achievements and events. They naturally go to alter our religious codes and ethics of conduct, our way of life and understanding, our outlook and temperament. So almost all elements to which man has so long clung are now in a melting pot and unrest, suspense, frustration, aimlessness, mark the key-note of modern living. Discordance in every sphere is the abiding theme of our age.

I have already remarked that the modern mind helped by science has vehemently reacted to the inhibitory and harsh rules and dogmas of old religions. The crisis of spirit has been deepened and precipitated by a peculiar attribute of human nature—it is the polarity of human mind. The human mind instinctively swings between two extreme poles of thought and conduct and this urge for polarity is a persistent quality of man. A Koestler writes in his famous book called 'Darkness At Noon'—"We seem to have faced with a pendulum movement in history swinging from absolutism to democracy, from democracy back to absolute dictatorship." Similarly, in the social, intellectual and physical spheres we witness this pendulum movement of our temper and life. We have swung from slavery to fixed conventions to the unbound freedom of license, from strict puritanism to excessive epicureanism, from orthodox religion to rank atheism. The return movement may take us



back to old things and that too would be equally injurious to the well-being of ours. Human beings are today by a strange process of historical growth between the devil of soulless intellectualism and the sea of unedifying theology or religion. Neither can satisfy them, yet unbelief is impossible; hence they are in a state of uncertainty "seeking blindly for some satisfying substitutes".<sup>10</sup>

The development of man has been heavily one-sided owing to the glaringly disproportionate development in the spheres of the non-human and the human. Arnold. J. Toynbee writes—".....it has been the great tragedy of human life that this sensational inequality of man's respective achievements in the non-human and the spiritual sphere should, so far at any rate, have been this way round; for the spiritual side of man's life is of vastly greater importance for man's well-being than is his command over non-human nature".<sup>11</sup> Organic structure and physiological mechanism now assume greater reality than thought, beauty and other noble ideas and creations. Thus slowly and gradually matter has climbed the throne of supremacy and soul is come to occupy an inferior position. Matter has immured the free, roving, creative spirit of man. In other words, matter at last has come to dominate and decide the destiny of humanity and man trembles before the monsters he himself has forged with his brain and hand. The tremendous power science has released is not properly utilised because mind is not yet trained and equipped for this titanic task.

Radical changes that have been ushered in by large scale industrial civilisation have adversely affected the mental health of the peoples of the advanced countries of

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10. See S. Radhakrishnan's *An Idealist View of Life*, Ch. II.

11. *Civilisation on Trial*, p. 262.



the world. The struggle for physical prosperity has subjected these peoples to severe mental strain and tension by the rising tempo of life under unaccustomed conditions. Man has escaped the danger of physical ill-health only to fall into the deadly peril of mental ill-health. Modern trends have also precipitated the crisis of human energy. Energy of man must necessarily find manifestation through some forms and media: it is the inexorable law of energy—physical or mental. The inexhaustible, creative energy of man, guided by a noble, selfless philosophy, has presided over the birth of Platonic visions and Kantian philosophy, heavenly creations of Michelangelo and profound inventions and discoveries of Einstein. And it motivated by the perversion of megalomania and animal passions has been the originator of inhuman Machiavellism, Fascism, Nazism and dictatorship and other horrible things. Now the human energy is not properly guided and controlled by a mature wisdom and deep vision of life and the present erratic aberrations of it are mainly due to this crisis resulting out of uncertainty and confusion of ends.

To sum up: Physically man is degraded by rich, elaborate and artificial food, comfort and dependence on mechanical amenities of life. Mentally he is a victim of hypertension, unrest, split-personality, frustration and other neurotic and psychical diseases. Intellectually he has been cynical, hedonistic and sceptic. Spiritually he is a pigmy and atheistic being.

## II

But in spite of the gloomy trends of modern scientific age the discerning eyes can visualise in it the silver-lining of hope and future redemption. The following can be the basis of our sustained optimism. Firstly, man is, for the



first time, with the help of science, the master of his external destiny. He is the indisputable possessor of unlimited power, technical knowledge, and secular gifts of life to transform the whole world into a utopia. Educational progress, economic prosperity and political freedom have attained today hitherto unknown standard. The infinite possibility of infinite good looms large on the horizon of man's destiny and this is indeed a propitious augury for the physical, mental and spiritual perfection. For, only when the basic needs of food and shelter, education and security are fulfilled can we have the emergence of religion as a stable and ennobling force in human society. Rightly Swami Vivekananda says that one cannot preach religion to the hungry millions.

Secondly, the unbearable arrogance of science and first delicious intoxications of early dramatic successes of it are almost gone now. Huxley says—".....it has become apparent that what triumphant science has done hitherto is to improve the means for achieving unimproved or actually deteriorated ends".<sup>12</sup> Science is coming to realise its limitations; it is sober, accommodating and flexible. It feels that the well-being of man cannot be effected solely by material contributions, and that there is need for non-scientific forces and elements for the fulfilment of man's higher destiny. The leading scientists too have realised that permanent and all-round good of man is not possible or attainable only through scientific and allied gifts and creations. We find that the scientists like Einstein, Jeans, Eddington, Haldane, Planck and others in their writings give persistent emphasis on the need of revival of moral, spiritual and aesthetic values in our life and aspiration.

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12. Ends and Means, p. 268.



So it is becoming increasingly clear today that science can play prominent but limited role in the welfare of humanity; other non-scientific elements like religion and morality must also play their equally important and necessary part to make the world truly perfect, peaceful and happy in every respect.

Thirdly, the speculative trends of physical science and the cumulative results of its ceaseless research, experiment and observation have become boldly monistic in character. The remorseless enquiry into the final constituents of matter has led the aspiring scientists towards a non-mechanical reality. The old concepts of mechanical reality and the insuperable division between matter and mind are gone. Now science has begun to work and think in the terms of a new synthesis and idealism. The evolution of scientific thought is steadily converging towards a monistic idealism and a supreme Principle. Law and order, harmony and beauty, reason and meaning of the universe have compelled the scientists to associate science with something infinite and spiritual or non-material. Furthermore, the philosophical speculations of modern physicists are frankly idealistic and spiritual in character. C. E. M. Joad says—"Thus, with regard to the most fundamental issues of metaphysics, the speculations of modern physicists seem to bear out and to support what is, perhaps, the main traditional mystic view".<sup>13</sup> These trends to a great extent have modified early antagonistic attitude of science to religion and metaphysical affairs.

Fourthly, the researches in the realm of mind and deep psychical phenomena of the sub-conscious and un-conscious by Freud, Jung, Alder, J. B. Rhine and others have revealed the existence of hitherto unknown and strangely

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13. Philosophical Aspects of Modern Science, p. 318.



extra-physical phenomena. Specially the results of Rhine's pioneering works in the realm of para-psychology are of outstanding importance in modern times. He is carrying out investigations in para-psychology in the laboratory of Duke University of U. S. A. Rhine writes in his world famous book called "The Reach Of The Mind"—"Is there anything extra-physical or spiritual in human personality? The experimental answer is 'Yes'.....the discovery of evidence that man is something more than a physical being supports the most basic of all religious doctrines, namely that man has a spiritual nature." Scientific investigations in the sphere of mental and psychical phenomena are of far-reaching significance for both science and religion.

Fifthly, science has done a great service to true religion by destroying the superficial and extraneous matter which had grown thick on the essence of religion and which had in the past rendered cogency of religion to a great extent ineffective. In one word, science has destroyed many positively harmful and ethically neutral aspects of religion. It has also to a great extent freed human mind from superstitions, fear, ignorance, which are the breeding ground of religious fanaticism and distortions. Mind now is increasingly rationalistic and universal, unbiassed and impartial and it is prepared for the acceptance of the life-giving fundamentals of religion.

Sixthly, the cumulative effects of modern trends, the results of war and frustration, insecurity and fear-complex and hundred other baneful factors have driven the modern man to the very bay of his mortal existence. The assaults of doubt are the first condition of spiritual regeneration and the dark night of the soul awaits now the dawn of spiritual awakening. Man is psychologically prepared and panting for the solace and guidance of religion. The passing



phase of hostility to religion is almost over; the cynicism and agnosticism arising out of atheism and confusion are inexorably burnt out by the intense suffering and anguish of the soul. The soul is ready to hear the voice of God crying in the wilderness.

### III

Blaise Pascal, the great mystic and philosopher says in "Pensees"—"Our senses perceive no extreme. Too much sound deafens us; too much light dazzles us; too much distance or proximity hinders our view. Too great length and too great brevity of discourse tend to obscurity; too much truth is paralysing." Thus the basic, irrefutable fact before us is that the human nature and faculties in the physical sense are subject to invincible laws of limitation. Every being is conditioned by certain irrevocable biological and allied laws; violation of these laws inevitably brings forth injurious reactions.

Modern man has forgotten this patent fact of life and universal truth; he is supremely conscious of his rights. He claims exclusive right to enjoy and live, to think and work, to express himself physically and intellectually without the slightest reservation and inhibition. He has forgotten that liberty should be counter-balanced by reservation, privileges by responsibilities, enjoyment by restraint, selfishness by self-sacrifice. The modern trends are based on excessiveness and abnormality; so the equipoise or rhythm of rest and movement, expenditure and renovation is lost. In the spectacular drama of life modern man has over-played his part. Man's capacity for enjoyment and work, and to adapt himself to a rapidly changing way of life is strictly limited. Hence if he over-acts, over-enjoys, over-works, over-lives, over-changes himself constantly most harmful



reactions are bound to follow and this has actually taken place to the great disadvantage of man.

Though the human nature is physically limited it is spiritually unlimited. His spiritual nature loves to roam unfettered in the region of infinity and eternal freedom, in untrammelled domain of vision and aspiration. In this freedom lies the true liberty and reality of man and liberating ideal of his life and destiny. Bertrand Russell writes—"In action, in desire, we must submit perpetually to the tyranny of outside forces; but in thought, in aspiration we are free.....".<sup>14</sup> But today the material basis of life has built a wall round the human existence. Man's adventure in the free realm of thought and spirit is stopped; the novelty and mystery which make life truly romantic and exciting are crushed by the matter of fact world. Thus the freedom-loving soul has been hemmed in from all sides. Rightly Fulton. J. Sheen says—"The modern soul has definitely limited its horizon; having negated the eternal destinies, it has lost its trust in nature..... Man now finds that he is locked up within himself, his own prisoner".<sup>15</sup> Now his every external outlet is closed by his own scepticism and in this way he has been compelled to fall back upon himself. C. G. Jung writes—"Through his scepticism the modern man is thrown back upon himself; his energies flow towards their source, and wash to the surface those psychic contents which are at all times there, but lie hidden in the silt, as long as the stream flows smoothly in its course".<sup>16</sup> This morbid introversion is neither spiritual nor spontaneous; it has been forced on man by external conditions of life and the result is not at all happy or benevolent for man.

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14. *Mysticism and Logic*, p. 54.

16. *Peace of Soul*, pp. 2-3.

16. *Modern Man In Search Of A Soul*, p. 235.



The human nature has in it an element of irrational or non-secular urge. Surround a man with every possible comfort and luxury that a scientific civilisation can bestow, but if you do not give him the gift of the spirit he would surely fail to be really happy or content. There are things of life, which have nothing to do with material utility or achievement. Yet a being naturally, spontaneously gravitates towards those things of the spirit and extra-physical aspirations. We cannot account for the action of a man who renounces a kingdom to wander bare-footed in the midst of extreme poverty and utter seclusion. Man has been, since time immemorial, responding to the inner, enigmatical call of the soul in unpredictable manners and ways that remain paradoxical even to the best brains of this age. This urge for the unknown, or this peculiar fascination for great renunciation and spiritual light, or this irrational attitude which spurns name and fame, comfort and luxury, selfishness and hundred other pleasures of realities, remains one of the profound and great conditions of human life. Yet this makes human life superior to animality; it makes it exciting pursuit after the infinite—a perpetual quest for an eternal fulfilment. By turning blind to this infinite aspect of life modern man is doing the greatest harm to himself.

Another condition of human nature is the dualism of goodness and badness. Man is compelled to incarcerate in this world with holy, spiritual qualities and full-blooded passions for earthly enjoyment and desire, self-centred impulses and secular prosperity. It has been man's fortune to inherit mixed propensities, good and bad, selfless and selfish, spiritual and material. The flesh in man cries for fulfilment, the soul in man aspires for spiritual realisation. This conflict is the eternal companion of man and it helps



to keep up the balance of life. The true history of mankind is the history of increasing mastery of soul over flesh, sacrifice over selfishness, universality over egosim. Modern man by deliberately blocking the counter-balancing power of soul has allowed the urges of flesh into an unfettered display and manifestation. The moral, ethical and religious forces which has been so long operating to strike a golden mean have been rendered ineffective. The result is simply appalling.<sup>17</sup>

There is no denying the fact that superficially or instinctively human nature is more or less susceptible to the outer conditions of life. Generally man is inclined towards physical actions and well-being, comfort and ease. Huxley observes that modernity has an inherent tendency to affect the expression of vitality by externalising it in the form of vehement action. Only through training and exercise of body and mind and cultivation of spirit can a man become aware of his higher destiny, the value of his precious manhood, self-restraint, self-sacrifice, catholicity, moral and spiritual enlightenment. It is easier for average man to inure himself to the private life of senses and worldly enjoyments and affairs; it is correspondingly harder for him to embrace the life of renunciation and dispassion, spirituality and high morality; they can make a man out of him in the truest sense of the term. It is also an old and indisputable fact that there is neither end nor satiety of human desire or ambition or hope for material gain. It is almost impossible for man to cry halt to his unending craving and modern man and trends exhibit in vivid way again and again this eternal truth regarding the human nature. I have outlined in short the peculiarities of human nature to throw

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17. See Man, The Unknown.



into bold relief the basic necessity of religion in the life of humanity.

#### IV

It is impossible to define religion in one sentence because it has diverse aspects that touch human existence at myriad points. But I believe that I will be voicing the essence of religion if I define religion as the fundamental urge of human nature to transcend the limitation of every kind to harmonise itself with a Principle or Order which is simultaneously immanent and transcendent. Almost all the great mystics, philosophers and prophets of the East and West go to confirm the above definition of religion. This Order or Principle is also visualised as Reason, or God, or Being, or Goal.

Therefore, the essential pre-suppositions of religion are the Order and the soul of man, which strives for harmony or identity with that Order. The suppositions involve the concept of latent identity or connection between the Order and the soul of man. The urge for harmony with the Order which Huxley calls "the integrating Principle of all beings" springs from the natural, universal "creature feeling" which makes man aware of his imperfection arising out the disharmony. Speaking about this feeling Rudolf Otto writes—"It is emotion of a creature abased and overwhelmed by its own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme above all".<sup>18</sup> Swami Vivekananda, Leo Tolstoy, William James, and others speak about this feeling and transcendent urge and see in them the origin of religion. William James speaks of two characteristics which are to be found in all religions and religious experiences; firstly,

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18. The Idea Of The Holy, p. 10.



there is a feeling that there is something wrong about man as he naturally stands; secondly, there is a feeling that he can be saved from that wrong by making proper connection with the higher powers. Eric. S. Waterhouse after discussing the definitions of religion from various view points ventures to give the following one with which I am in agreement.—“Religion is man’s attempt to supplement his felt insufficiency by allying himself with a higher order of being which he believes is manifest in the world and can be brought into sympathetic relationship with himself, if rightly approached”.<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, the supreme aim of religion is the factual realisation of the harmony between the aspiring soul and the integrating Principle. This realisation is conditional upon certain prerequisites and faith in certain ultimate values; the establishment of harmony calls for spiritual values. In other words, religion is fundamentally, spiritually permeated; it is spiritual in nature and involves faith in values as opposed to faith in things only. Religion asks us to combine our faith in things with faith in values; it is the expression of divinity that is inherent in all; it is the connecting link between things and values, real and ideal.

The pre-conditions are fulfilled and faith in values is justified by the practice of morality and spirituality and through training and self-education in body and mind. Prolonged self-education prepares the man and makes him worthy and eligible for religion. When he becomes actual partaker of religion the faith in spiritual values is transformed into realisation of such values. Inner life of religion finds expression in contemplation, meditation, illumination and realisation; outer expressions of religion are universal

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19. The Philosophical Approach To Religion, p. 24.



love and service, sympathy and charity, and other edifying, uplifting acts of glorious sentiments and compassion.

Self-denial, renunciation, spiritual exercise, codes of ethics, worship, prayer, philosophy, æsthetics are not religion. They have relation to religion only in so far as they assist religious person to attain the highest goal: harmony of soul with the Supreme Being or Order. Religion is unique, specific expression and it cannot be equated with anything. It finds its own vindication in religious experiences. Religious experiences may take various forms of wonder and awe, of deep sense of mystery and profound realisation of truth, beauty and goodness; they may assume the forms of emotional experience or austere serenity, of edifying peace or intense illumination arising out of the awareness of the presence of the Supreme Being within and without. The experiences may be transient and long, mild and recondite, uniform and diverse, immanental and transcendental.

So, in the final analysis, religion is experience or realisation as opposed to mere comprehension or theoretical knowledge. Hence there is nothing fantastic or illusory in religion because it stands the 'baptism of fire'—the test of reality. Moreover, it is intensely practical and it daily comes to the use of man throughout his life. The objects which have been experienced and re-experienced through thousands of years the world over have the undeniable right to claim supreme validity and truth. Religion demands from every aspirant the fulfilment of a few difficult conditions and when this basic demand is fulfilled realisation comes to the seeker. So religious faith is a mere faith so long as it is a pious wish; is a reality when it is fully and vividly experienced by the aspirant through severe path of struggle. C. E. M.



Joad thinks that the contemptuous dismissal of the mystic's vision is due to the prejudices of common-sense. He says—"For the mystic, as for the artist, his revelation is undeniably a part of his experience; it is there; it is real".<sup>20</sup> Joad thinks that it is possible to induce certain condition through certain method; the condition modifies the perceiving apparatus and the mystic's world is changed in this way; a deepened, widened and enriched realm of true reality is revealed unto him. In religion one witnesses the dualism of limitation of vision and the infinity of spirit, imperfection and perfection, creature-feeling and God-feeling, disharmony and harmony. That is why, perhaps, F.B. Bradley relegates religion to the realm of appearance.<sup>21</sup> Yet the aim of religion is to transcend all forms of dualism; then, man goes beyond all bonds.

In essence religion is symbolical of an ideality—a spiritual goal—a perpetual quest—a transcendental urge for harmony with the Order. Yet it cannot remain a flaming urge for God or a radiant vision of the Supreme; it inevitably needs for stability the flesh and blood in the shape rules and rituals, precepts and theology. It is precisely due to these the world has witnessed down the ages endless strife and blood-shed, disharmony and conflict in the name of religion. Religion has two aspects—the essential and the formal. The fundamental principles that form the essence of religion spring from the urge for harmony of soul with the Order. They are the results of the struggle to know God, which the transcendental urge calls into being. We should bear in mind this important fact. Rules and rituals stemming from social, economic, emotional, national and other factors and forces go to form the formal

20. *Philosophical Aspects of Modern Science*, p. 322.

21. See his *Appearance And Reality*, pp. 388-402.



structure of religion. So certain unalterable truths born of spiritual realisation and religious urge are the essential basis of religion and on it is raised the structure of rules and rituals, myths and allied things. This has been the trend of all major, living and historical religions of the world. Many a scholar again visualises the emergence of the fundamentals of religion from rituals and myths, fantasies and primitive practices. But religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity have followed the former process.

Every great religion in course of centuries gathers round its pristine essence the coverings of rites and faiths, myths and magics. Slowly and gradually every religion is coloured by the social, cultural, economic and political actions and reactions, by the pattern and movement of the successive ages, by strange beliefs and practices of its innumerable converts. No historical religion has been able to avoid this conscious or unconscious process of accretion and eclecticism, which is sure to distort or obfuscate the vision and cogency of the original fundamentals. Principles and penetrating visions, rare spiritual experience and unique religious depth of a few can hardly satisfy the vast majority of people at large. Therefore, it is certain that there will be always two types of religion in the bosom of every living religion, religion for a few exceptional people and religion for the common people. The first will embody the essential vision and supreme goal of spiritual journey of humanity; the second will present a popular and crystallised version of the former in the shape of religious rites and acts, observances and ceremonials. The second type of religion will be saved from deterioration if it is sustained and guided by the understanding and light of the former. It is equally true that religion of the common people will



mainly function as codes of ethics and morality, as the instrument of emotional satisfaction and solace. The former symbolises the life of spiritual illumination—an inner intuitive way of mystical existence; the latter should be the outward expression of the inner religion in social, economic and other spheres of daily human life.

Religion is always dynamic; it is always on the move to adjust itself to the changing ways of life without losing its essentials. Every living, historical religion has seen recurrent rise and fall, regeneration and decay, unity and diversity as regards its externals. Repeatedly it has tried to adjust itself and its outgrowths to the mobile needs and demands of the ages resulting from mundane and other elements and forces sometimes with success, sometimes with failure. But it is always vividly alive and potentially powerful.

## V

We have already seen that the very constitution of man presupposes the essential need of religion. The human nature and religion are two eternally, inseparably enlinked and united factors. A student of history knows that man has never been without religion of some sort and all great thinkers support this view. That is why Swami Vivekananda thinks that religion is the constitutional necessity of man.

Tolstoy rightly observes that so long as the inexorable spectacle of death and misery, the evanescent drama of life and creation, the overwhelming awareness of want and insignificance of human life remains man will continue to have religion. There is obvious error in thinking that to-day human nature has changed; the cardinal phenomena of it have not changed—can never change. The emotions,



sentiments, hopes, aspirations, dreams, fears, longing for perfection and the unknown are its eternal ingredients. They can be modified or refined or one element may be emphasised; but they can never be radically eliminated or fully transformed or changed beyond recognition. So man had aspired for religion, still aspires and will always aspire for religion. We must be bold enough to realise this fact once and for all.

Man is a harmonious and homogenous being; his personality represents a union and it cannot be divided into watertight compartments. Man's true progress is possible when he takes into consideration both inner and outer conditions of life as a whole. May man advance materially through the awareness of, and ability to deal with things and events in the external world but true, all-round advancement is only possible when this ability is combined with the ability to deal properly with the factors of the inner world of mind and soul.<sup>22</sup> Man should make outward and inward progress; he has learnt to control the external nature but unfortunately failed to govern the inner nature. And without the mastery of internal nature, the power and achievement of the control of outer universe cannot be utilised for the well-being of entire humanity. Ultimately salvation of man depends upon the proper utilisation of inner conditions of life. Herein we feel the need of religion. Religion teaches man that the hostile forces cannot harm man if he stands securely on the adamant foundations of his inner being and visualises everything in the light of internal need and capacity. It is because modern man is uncertain of the value of his inner

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22. See Ends And Means, p. 321.



being he is susceptible to every whim or fancy or idea of the day—to every political wind or intellectual audacity of the age. Therefore, I believe that the solution of the crisis of the modern man lies rooted in his own self—in the hidden possibility of his true, everlasting being which religion alone can bring into full flowering. Joshua Loth Liebman writes in *The Peace of Mind*—"Both science and religion teach us at last, that the obstacles to serenity are not external. They lie within". The external achievements can only touch the the outer fringe of life. They can well-clothe, well-feed, well-educate and well-house man but they cannot edify or develop the hidden powers of soul or help man control and govern lust, greed, passion, evil, avarice, ambition whose untrammelled display often turn the fair face of the earth into a place of chaos and doom.

Firstly, therefore, religion tries to render ineffective positively harmful and ethically neutral internal urges and passions of man; it tries to guide, train and develop noble, salutary urges and emotions of man. Thus it has double function as regards human nature. Secondly, religion releases man from the claustrophobia of confining materialism; it makes man the partaker of the realm of spirituality and mystic adventure. It places at the disposal of man infinite and free domain of his total, inner and unified being and various divine possibilities. It gives man added strength and establishes his contact with a perennial power which is ever-good; it gives man some insight about his own self. What value a life of man has strictly from objective, scientific and physical view-point? Bertrand Russell says—"The life of man, viewed outwardly, is but a small thing in comparison with the forces of Nature. The slave is doomed to worship Time and Fate and Death, because they are greater than anything he finds in himself and



because all his thoughts are of things which they devour".<sup>23</sup> "Brief and powerless is man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way."<sup>24</sup> Religion comes forward to relieve the relentless pressure of matter on man. The soul fortified and sustained by the urge and vision of creative freedom and ultimate end survives the onslaught of pain and despair, of agony and misfortune of fate. And out of this struggle with the external universe "renunciation, wisdom and charity are born". In physical action and desire man must perpetually submit to the tyranny of outside force; but he is free in thought and aspiration. Then, what should be the aim of man in the highest sense? Bertrans Russell answers—"To abandon the struggle for private happiness, to expel all eagerness of temporary desire, to burn with passion for eternal things—this is emancipation and this is free man's worship".<sup>25</sup> And I may add that this is also free man's religion.

Thirdly, the necessity of religion as a fundamental ethics can never be over-estimated. For, religion opposes injustice with justice, immorality with morality, egoism with universality, matter with spirit, desire with renunciation, bondage with the promise of liberation. It is solely concerned with man's daily practical life and eschatological end; it stands as a census to his conduct and thought in private and public—for the harmonious development of soul and body. It frees man from petty chauvinism which is often the cause of war and hatred; for, religion is world-loyalty says Whitehead. It places before man a Supreme

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23. *Mysticism And Logic*, p. 58.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

25. *Mysticism And Logic*, p. 58.



Ideal and a supreme Goal and a supreme God which are attainable by the conformation of human action and will to the dictates of religion. Above all, religion gives man a balanced perspective of life, a sense of moderation and proportion—a feeling of right way. It renders the arrogance of science and reason ineffective and gives equal emphasis on matters material and spiritual holding spirituality as ultimate goal; it combines values and things. And in moments of deep unrest and psychic storms, in times of anguish and death, pain and separation, misfortune and longing, when all other helpers flee, religion is the undying source of incessant strength, light and peace.

## VI

There cannot be any conflict between science and religion if the demands and goals of both are always clearly kept in view. The work of science is to explain objectively; the work of religion is to interpret subjectively. Once upon a time religion had to function as science, art, philosophy, magic. Now that phase is over and both science and religion are coming to realise more and more the need and virtue of confining themselves within their respective domains. In old days conflict used to begin when both of them claimed absolute right over all things—one intruding upon the realm of the other.

The advancement of knowledge has sobered them both and they are trying to give up the totalitarian attitude which is the main cause of trouble between them. They have come to realise their limitations and respect the essential sovereignty of each other; the spirit of submission now characterises the temper of science and religion. They should co-operate and keep in view the fact that they are



solely for the welfare of humanity, that Man's well-being should be the measure of their value. Bertrand Russell writes—".... in every deeply serious view of the world and human destiny, there is element of submission—a realisation of the limits of human power.....The submission which religion incalculates in action is essentially the same spirit as that which science teaches in thought".<sup>26</sup> More over, they both symbolise two different aspects of man's search for knowledge and reality. Eric. S. Waterhouse writes—"Science and religion represent different aspects of man's quest for reality and in the true sense there can be no more conflict between science and religion than between science and art.....what is taught in the name of religion, and what is equally taught in the name of science, may conflict but between science and religion there cannot be any dispute".<sup>27</sup>

Science is concerned with facts—at the best with secular utility; religion deals with facts of life as well as with values of life. Hence religion touches the realm of science indirectly when the time comes for the proper utilisation of the gifts of science for human welfare. So in one sense the domains of both are sufficiently different to allow both full liberty and opportunity for development. But all the while the welfare of man, which is the common goal of both science and religion, must be kept in view. And we must also be careful not to divorce values from things or facts in actual life because the separation of religion from science in practical field is not conducive to good results. Equally harmful would be any attempt to make religion of science, or science of religion. We hear now-a-days about scientific religion and religious science. I do

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26. *Mysticism And Logic*, p. 36.

27. *The Philosophical Approach To Religion*, p. 27.



not definitely believe in the forced synthesis of religion and science, for, such unnatural amalgamation or palingenesis has always been a failure and it can neither serve the cause of religion, nor that of science. It is quite possible for a man to be simultaneously religious and scientific as Newton, Edison and other scientists were and are and as thousands of common people the world were and are. But the radical transformation of science or religion would tend to negate the basic content and value of both.

Therefore, under the circumstances, the only possible solution is that religion and science should co-exist, respect each other and recognise their need for the common well-being of man on the basis of their respective limitations. They should combine in the total personality of man to cancel the evils arising out of their by-products; they should guide and uplift man physically, intellectually and spiritually. Actually religion and science fully co-operate only when the human conduct and thought in practical life are involved affecting the peoples and nations. Science like a machine produces two things, namely knowledge and gifts and through them it tends to change the human life for the better or for the worse and here the need of religion comes to the forefront to block the evil influences of science from leading man to pitfalls. Science in itself is a neutral element; its use and misuses is done by man. The aim of religion is to temper the attitude, outlook and emotion of man so that he may rightly use the gifts and knowledge of science for his own good and for the good of the whole world. In other words, religion is concerned with the mind and soul of man who is applying the gifts and knowledge to his practical life. So the aim of science is to produce the perfect means so that religion which envisions perfect ends, may utilise the perfect means for the perfect



ends. To-day the realisation of ends has become chaotic and haphazard because the totalitarian attitude of science still persists to some extent. John Dewey says—"With tremendous increase in our control of nature, in our ability to utilise nature for human use and satisfaction, we find the actual realisation of ends, the enjoyment of values, growing unassured and precarious".<sup>28</sup> So in the development of science and its application religion must play its indispensable and successful part. I have remarked earlier that science in itself is a neutral power which is ethically neutral too. It can be made positively ethically propitious in practice by the practice of religion and morality. Bertrand Russell writes—"There are two ancient evils that science, unwisely used may intensify; they are tyranny and war".<sup>29</sup> Speaking about the power of science John Dewey again says—".....it has been largely used to increase, instead of reduce, the power of Man over man".<sup>30</sup> Herein we find the danger of science with which it may threaten mankind if it is allowed to have its unmitigated sway over humanity. Religion must be there to purify its material energy—to use its power wisely.

Religion has nothing to do with the theoretical realm of science, with its research and experiment, with its technical knowledge born of observation, experiment, invention and discovery. Religion is concerned with science in action in relation to teeming millions. Religion, can of course, colour the temper of the scientists with lofty ideals; for example, the scientists can, at the dictates of religion, refuse to forge the monsters of destruction and war. Religion can make humanity at large aware of the utter futility of

28. Quoted by Will Durant in *The Story of Philosophy*, p. 448.

29. *The Impact Of Science On Society*, p. 104.

30. *Freedom And Culture*, p. 116.



war and hatred. Thus in various ways it can neutralise the secular and harmful exuberance of science and modify its inherent materialism by its (religion's) own spiritualism. Science has a tendency to lead average man towards materialism just as religion tends to turn man towards the other world. And both the extremes cannot be good for common humanity—so a golden way must be introduced to steer man along a middle path. Science, on the other hand, can destroy the by-products of religion such as myths, magics, superstitions, ignorance, distortions, perversions. Thus it can make religion fully beneficial to mankind, consolidate its ideas, systematise and rationalise its cardinal doctrines.

To sum up: science and religion should co-exist and uplift, rectify and modify each other for the benefit of mankind. They in this way can turn the world into a utopia where science will drive away disease and hunger, want and ignorance and religion would establish the reign of peace and virtue, contentment and self-control, universal and spiritual love and sympathy. Bertrand Russell declares that one thing can change the face of the whole world for the better and that essentially necessary thing is true, universal love which he calls 'Christian love'. He says "If you feel this, you have a motive for existence, a guide in action, a reason for courage, an imperative necessity for intellectual honesty".<sup>31</sup> And this love or compassion is in the heart of true religion. Happily to-day the great modern scientists have come to recognise the need of co-operation of science and religion. The greatest scientist of this age boldly declares: "Science without religion is lame—religion without science is blind."

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31. *The Impact Of Science On Society*, p. 114.



## VII

Religion in order to be really powerful and effective in modern times must undergo certain reformations and renovations. I firmly believe that the decline of religion in modern age is mainly due to its own demerits and defects; non-religious factors and forces have played a secondar role to hasten the decline of religion and its deterioration. So to place religion on a strong and secure foundation once again we must first reform it and then, should we venture to attack the forces that are trying to undermine it. A house divided and weak cannot meet its enemies effectively and successfully. We all know that every religion worth a name has three aspects, namely ethically neutral, harmful and positively wholesome. Now time is come to make religion only positively good and life-giving for the entire world and mankind. I firmly believe that in this age of enlightenment and universal education it is possible to retain only the beneficial part of religion. In my opinion the following causes have always worked for the distortion and decline of religion:

1. Secularisation.
2. Intrusion on the fields of others.
3. Dogmatic, absolute and all-inclusive claims.
4. Divergence from essentials and emphasis on non-essentials.
5. Internal bickerings.
6. Vagueness and mystification.
7. Subservience to chauvinism, party-leadership, vested interest etc.      ..
8. Proselytism or conversion.
9. Reliance on threat, compulsion and concept of sin.



Great injury is done to religion when it is equated with secular utility and materialism. Religion must always remain fundamentally and rigidly spiritual if it is to maintain its cogency. It may be true that conformation to its dictates may give rise to spiritual as well as secular benefits. But utility and comfort are not the end or essence of religion. When it is connected with and grounded on secular utility and motive it is subtly degraded. Whitehead says—"The non-religious motive which has entered into modern religious thought is the desire for a comfortable organisation of modern society.....Also the purpose of right conduct quickly degenerates into the formation of pleasing social relations.....We have a subtle degradation of religious ideas".<sup>32</sup> Religion is not the right conduct; it is something more; it is a spiritual force. We must immediately stop this process secularisation; religion should not—cannot vouch-safe earthly comforts; its sole power is spirituality and universal morality. Secondly, religion and the custodians of its should try to dissociate themselves gradually from secular wealth which has become their own. Secular wealth and social organisation are necessary for religion to some extent in modern times, but religion must not become merely a material organisation or the instrument for the propagation of materialism which includes among other things pomp and pageantry, the parade of earthly riches, the palaces and luxury, magic and miracles, superstition and ignorance. All these things do great harm to it ultimately. J. S. Haldane writes—"The materialism with which the orthodox theology is at present shot through and through is the whole source of the weakness of religious belief in presence of the

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32. Science And The Modern World, p. 191.



sciences and of the alienation between religious belief and the sciences".<sup>33</sup> By 'materialism' he also means interference, miracles and other superstitions.

Once upon a time religion had to be the Jack of all trade; there was need, then, of its multiform functions. But now no such necessity is there; now such diverse functions become the intrusion on the realms of other branches of knowledge. So to-day religion should concentrate on its own aim and function and should not intrude on the theoretical fields of science, philosophy, economics, art, literature. Religion is primarily concerned with man and it comes into contact with science, politics and others when their actions involve the destiny of man. Religion has nothing to do with the theoretical aspect of theirs. For instance, it would be height of foolishness on the part of religion to call in question the findings of neo-physics regarding the nature and constituents of the physical universe. C. E. M. Joad thinks that if religion is to survive it must not do the following two things—(i) it must not teach beliefs about the nature of the physical universe which science has shown to be false, (ii) with regard to the non-physical universe, it must not teach as absolute truths dogmas which cannot be known to be either true or false, but which there is no reason to think true.<sup>34</sup>

In Europe in every fight with science on physical things religion had to admit defeat. We must accept and respect the lessons of history. So religion should direct its energy for the re-making of man; and if it can transform his personality science, economics, politics, art, literature emerging from the creative mind of man would be com-

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33. Quoted by S. Radhakrishnan in *An Idealist View Of Life*, p. 79.

34. *The Present and Future Religion*, p. 212.



pletely wholesome and purifying for humanity. Religion should uphold the spiritual nature of man and through awakened spirituality of man reformation in every field will set in. Religion thus can indirectly influence the secular forces by developing and strengthening the hidden divine powers in man. Yet I do not suggest the separation of secular aspect of life from the spiritual, for, such separation, I have remarked earlier has led to disaster. R. H. Tawney shows in his classic work that when the secular and religious aspects of life are considered as parallel and independent realms and "not as successive stages within a larger unity" economic ambitions tend to degenerate man. He thinks that religion is the key-stone of social edifice.<sup>35</sup>

Dogmatism, absolute and all-inclusive claims are repugnant to modern mind and understading. Dogmatism is static and illogical; it is based on unreason and concept of force and irrational authority. Religion must now be dynamic and give up narrow, fixed and old ideas of theism; it should be accommodating in spirit, flexible and plastic in temper and movement; it should be open to new assimilations and accept change as regards its externals with the spirit of science. The vision and understanding of religion should be widened and enriched; for example, in old orthodox sense Einstein has been an etheist but in the true sense of religion he has been supremely religious. Religion must have a resilience to mould itself anew according to the needs and inclinations of the modern and future times and temper. But it should not labour under the false idea that it is the only panacea of all evils and imperfections. It certainly fulfils a great need of man; but there are other things too which are equally essential

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35. See his Religion and Rise Of Capitalism, last chapter.



for man's well-being. Religion must, therefore, recognise the need, value and importance of things such as art, science, education, material gifts, for, we know that any extreme, one-sided view of life is harmful in the long run.

Divergence from principles and emphasis on rituals are always highly injurious to the purity and power of religion as a whole; and they have been a decisive factor for the decline of religion. Principles are always simple and of universal application; they are always life-giving and unifying. Rituals and rules are open to misuse and have been the cause of priest-tyranny, superstition, fanaticism, distortions. But rituals cannot go because religion cannot exist without them so far as common people are concerned. So the solution is to be found in the reconciliation of rituals with the basic principles. In other words, the potential harm of the rituals can be rendered harmless by making the rituals subservient to essence or fundamentals of religion. In an age of universal enlightenment and education principles are easily assimilated and accepted. The conflict begins between religion and religion owing to the forms or various practices of it; in principles there universal agreement among all major religions of the world and we must remember this important fact.

The conflict between religion and religion and conflict between branches in a religion have done the greatest harm to religion. It is the foremost duty of all religions to stop this baneful bickering among themselves. Swami Vivekananda observes that if one living, historical religion is false, then, all other such religions are bound to be false also. So the conflict among religions weakens the very foundations of religion itself; conversely, if one such religion is true, then, all such religions must be true also. Swami Vivekananda observes that a true Hindu is a true



Christaian and vice versa. A house united and strong can face with courage and success attack from any quater. So religions and the religious peoples the world over must now be united as never before to beat back the rising tide of materialism and atheism of the day.

Religion has so long played into the hands of the reactionary forces by being insisently vague and mystical, awe-inspiring and enigmatical. Now it can no longer rest on vacuous or tenuous ground. Hence the crying need of the hour is the exposition of basic factors of religions in clear and unambiguous language. These tenets should be harmonised with the wide, scientific and healthy temper of the age. A clear, true and concise picture of essence of all religions should be presented to all—rich and poor, learned and fool. I feel that the principles of all religions must be taught in homes and nurseries, in schools and colleges, in villages and towns, in mills and factors. Vagueness must go; dynamic vision and pellucid light of religion must illumine the heart of every mortal.<sup>36</sup>

Henry Bergson says that in times of war the chauvinistic character of a state-religion of the closed society is clearly indicated. Then, one religion inspires its followers to kill, torture and destroy the peoples belonging to the same or different religions. The subservience of religion to chauvinism, party-leadership, vested interests and the like has done great harm to the cause of religion and humanity. Nazism, Facism, exploitation, militant nationalism which have often disfigured the face of the earth have often sprung from this weakness of religion. Therefore, it is solely imperative for religion or religions to refuse to have anything to do with these ugly forces. Religion is world-

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36. See Dr. Bhagavan Das's *The Essential Unity Of All Religions*.



loyalty; it signifies one universal brotherhood of mankind under one Father-hood of God; it enfolds the entire world of creation in space and time; it the symbol of safety and well-being not only of humanity but also of the kingdom of all things living and non-living. It is the guarantee of all universal values and transcendental moral and spiritual order. Religion must, therefore, condemn exploitation, war, race-inequality, injustice in any form, slavery in all times clearly, openly and fearlessly. It must stand securely on its foundations of spirituality and humane principles. It must be a sovereign realm of free souls subservient to none, complete master of itself in real sense of the term. Its sole concern is the welfare of humanity at large and not the particular welfare of a particular race or country at the cost of other races and countries of the world.

To ensure once and for all the future fruitful co-existence of all religions the process of conversion or proselytism must immediately stop. The old myth of superiority of a particular religion or race is exploded today. It is quite true and likely that one religion may in some respects be superior to another; it is also possible that that religion may be inferior to another in other respects. But a religion as a whole cannot be inferior or superior to any religion as a whole. Here I have in mind all major, living and historical religions of the world. Hence the followers of one religion lacking certain good qualities which another religion possesses should unhesitatingly accept and assimilate those qualities. But here the possibility and question of conversion must be ruled out for ever. It is simply a question of proper perspective, a relativity and balanced understanding. A historical approach to all major religions may be very helpful in this matter.<sup>37</sup>

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37. See Prof. Toynbee's *An Historical Approach To Religion*.



Conversion creates bitterness, superiority-inferiority complex, political conflict, racial antagonism, economic exploitation and social chaos. One may ask what about the aboriginals? The clear answer is: Educate them in ethics of conduct and secular benefits, in education and technology and all will be well for them. Do not persuade them by force or temptation to worship an alien deity and to follow alien rules of an alien religion. In place of conversion let common principles of religions be taught and emphasis be given on points of agreement between religions. Let every person from his very childhood come to realise these universal points of agreement—then, all conflict based on misunderstanding will vanish away for ever.

Reliance on threat and compulsion, secular and spiritual power for questionable ends is very harmful for religion ultimately. In the past the concept of sin and authority played a significant role in upholding the law of religion and in crushing the opposition of free, enquiring mind. But now to connect religion with threat, is incorrect and repugnant to modern mind; it is also against the clear dictates of religion. Authority should be based on truth, experience and verification in practice and not on illogical arrogance of a few or on awe-inspiring priest-tyranny. To compel by threat is a grave miscarriage of religious justice; for, power is oppression if it is used to gain questionable ends. Similarly, to harp on sin of man is injustice to the inherent dignity of man; it is also of little importance in modern times because modern man is not cowed down by it. Therefore, reliance on threat, secular power, sin and questionable ends and authority must go now from the domain of religion. The methods of persuasion and appeal to intellect, higher nature and emotion of man should



be the future instruments of all religions. Religious power and authority springing from realisation and spiritual illumination are spontaneous and eternally propitious and a boon for all mankind. They are not opposed to free, creative vision or truly searching reason of man. So in future religion will be propagated through vision and sympathy, through understanding and fellow-feeling, through love and universality, through spirituality and transcendent unity.

Lastly, we would do well to bear in mind the following things when we consider the vital question of the reformation of religion. Firstly, any attempt to evolve a synthetic world-religion has always failed; one world-religion is not possible for obvious reasons. Religion must function and influence people through living, historical forms of religion as F. Paulsen observes. Happy and fruitful co-existence of religions will destroy their baneful aspects and do immense good to us. This is the only way. Secondly, in our attempt to make religion modern and acceptable we must not sacrifice its main tenets for the sake of expediency. Only the acceptance of the basic essentials will see us through the present crisis of the spirit. Thirdly, religion in true, higher sense will always remain spiritual and ultimately transcendental. Transcendent spirituality embracing all universal values and beings is the fundamental essence of religion. In the final analysis, it is based on experience and inner life and it will always have an element of non-rationality. For, it is neither rule nor code of ethics, neither theology nor philosophy. It is a perpetually dynamic urge for the harmony of unitive life and God-realisation. The ever-lasting harmony of soul with the Order—immanent and transcendent, is its perennial quest and its Supreme Goal.



## CHAPTER II

### JOHN CAIRD ON RELIGION



*Religion And Philosophy—Need Of Religion  
—Religious Consciousness—Moral Life—Religious Life—God.*

"Now of all rivers the most sacred is that which gushes out eternally from the depths of the soul, from its rocks and sands and glaciers. Therein lies primeval Force and that is what I call religion. Everything belongs to this river of the soul, flowing from the dark unplumbed reservoir of our being down the inevitable slope to the ocean of the conscious, realised and mastered Being."

*—Romain Rolland—*

#### I

John Caird proposes to find out and outline a philosophy of religion. This endeavour presupposes that religion and its ideas can be taken out of the realm of feeling and made objects of philosophical or rational analysis and evaluation. He feels that religious feeling or experience involves an element of knowledge. But the knowledge which is involved solely in religious feeling is very vague and implicit; it is the result of spontaneous and immediate reaction of the religious impulse of man.

This vague knowledge should become rational and higher precept through the process of philosophical analysis



and ratiocination. In the domain of philosophy religious ideas and experiences are intended to be purified; here they go beyond the pale of immediacy or intuitive vision in which mind is one with its objects. Here there are no tumults of emotion, no psychic unrest, no passion, no blind urge of faith in the valley of mystic adventure. Here reason analyses, doubts, and cogitates to seek out a deep, indissoluble unity of religious values and truths, experiences and feelings. It is the imperative duty of philosophy to transform the vague, individual and partial religious ideas and feelings into universally valid objects and coherent precepts of universal reason and logic. The aim of philosophy is the comprehensive and synthetic apprehension of the nature of supreme Reality of God. It encompasses the entire world of reality and the totality of human experiences; the domain lies nearest to it. Caird writes—"...in one point of view, religion and philosophy have common objects and a common content, and in the explanation of religion philosophy may be said to be at the same explaining itself".<sup>1</sup> But there are mainly three objections against the possibility of a philosophy of religion. They are as follows :

1. The religious truth is beyond the scope of human intelligence, consequently of philosophy.

2. The religious truth is attainable only by intuition and not by any rational process.

3. The religious truth is the result of fixed supernatural revelation; hence the construction of a philosophy of religion is impossible.

Caird repudiates the above three objections mainly on the following grounds. 1. The two elements which the first

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1. An Introduction To The Philosophy Of Religion, p. 3.



objection presupposes are definitely irreconcilable. It is impossible to maintain simultaneously that human intelligence is limited to the finite realm, and that it is conscious of the reality beyond the finite world. Secondly, the only conclusion of the above view would be that no absolute Being exists. For, to deny the capacity of human mind to know the Reality is to render the supposed existence of It meaningless. Thirdly, the view when closely examined tends to reveal its false process of abstraction. It first conjures up a fictitious entity and then "charges consciousness with imbecility because of its inability to think that fiction." Fourthly, the worship and the adoration of the Unknown is really an impossible and self-contradictory attitude of mind.

2. The second objection, firstly, is based on a misconception about the nature, aim and function of the philosophy of religion. The philosophy of religion does not aim to produce any direct religious experience or result. Reason does not want to usurp the position of intuition; philosophy does not pretend to make man virtuous or aspire to create piety or intrude upon the essential realm of religion. It presupposes religion and makes no claim to create it. It is concerned with results and facts, ideas and experiences, feelings and emotions of religion. So religion and philosophy are not rivals but the two essential processes through which knowledge passes to become synthetic, logical and universal truths. Secondly, it is wrong to hold that rational, scientific thought is narrower and more abstract than intuition. The rational thought too ultimately seeks to find out the unity and harmony of religious truths. It aims at a deep, lasting unity in natural, human and divine phenomena. But to arrive at this basic underlying unity it breaks up the fair and concrete whole-



ness of immediate experience by the scientific method of analysis, division and abstraction. Therefore, the aim of reason and intuition are the same though they may follow different paths to attain the self-same truth. But reason is superior to intuition for obvious reasons. Thirdly, it has been maintained that any knowledge other than immediate, intuitive knowledge of God is self-contradictory. This view is open to the following objections. The immediate experience is no proof that we have attained the underivative element of knowledge and even if we had reached the same the validity and security of such immediate conviction is based on purely empirical grounds. One cannot logically maintain that the notions which immediately and spontaneously present themselves during intuitive experiences are ultimate and underived notions and consequently of absolute truth and universal value.

3. The third objection is refuted by Caird on the following grounds. Firstly, though the element of revelation is a necessary presupposition of religion, it does not necessarily exclude the activity of reason. It is not at all necessary to hold that revelation is either contrary to reason or above it. The difference between the two is not absolute because its acceptance would mean that what is impossible and absurd to human reason is true in the sense of revelation. It is impossible to think that in human spirit there is eternal conflict between faith and reason. So reason should be the competent judge of the credentials of revelation—if not of its content. Secondly, it is a contradiction thus to hold that the revelation which is contrary to reason should be accepted as true. Thirdly, the revelation of a transcendent mystery which is completely unrelated to the finite sphere of thought and reason, is self-contradictory. The eternal things may be disclosed



to us through revelation in finite forms and symbols, but the relation between the human and the divine, earthly understanding and spiritual reality is to be really presupposed and maintained. Caird writes—"Nothing that is absolutely inscrutable to reason can be known to faith. It is only because the content of a revelation is implicitly rational that it can possess any self-evidencing power or exert any moral influence over the human spirit".<sup>2</sup>

## II

All religious experiences, feelings and acts are possible to spiritual and intelligent beings and they are grounded on essential relation of the human soul and the divine. Therefore, religious feelings and acts are not fortuitous or accidental but the conscious or unconscious manifestations of the hidden, logical and spiritual process. It is the mission of the philosophy of religion to reveal the relations of the finite spirit with the unseen eternal—to show how the former transcends its finitude to participate in the freedom of universal communion with things infinite and eternal. In performing this task the philosophy tends to exhibit the necessity of religion.

The concept of necessity of religion does not hold that every man needs be religious. It goes to point out that religion is necessary to man as he is but it does not claim that no human being exists who is not aware of this necessity. Religion is a necessity just as morality, law, science, philosophy are necessary for human beings. It is not also necessary in this connection to show or maintain that the religious ideas of all persons or of all races have been coincident. It would be equally illogical to insist

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2. Ibid., p. 73.



on universal and common factors of all positive and historical religions and to visualise them as only essential ideas of religions. All religions have specially differentiating characteristics and we should preserve them; the highest religion is not exclusive or inclusive of all the best elements of all religions—higher and lower.

To reveal the need of religion we should try to prove that the transcendental religious urge to go beyond the finite and the relative, to converse with the infinite, absolute existence, is inherent in the very nature of human beings. We should try to point out that every finite mind is definitely capable of rising to the knowledge supreme of Godhead. Caird writes—"What we have to show, is not only that the finite mind may, but that it must rise to the knowledge of God".<sup>3</sup> The necessity of religion holds that in the very nature of man as an intelligent self-conscious being there is an undying element which compels him to transcend what is finite and material and to attain the vision and realisation of an infinite, all comprehending mind or soul. But if the materialistic theories can explain human and material phenomena and events fully there is no need of the idea of the divine, consequently of religion. But Caird holds that the theories of materialism are inadequate and inconsistent on the following grounds.

1. "Professing to exclude mind, or ultimately to reduce it to a function of matter, they really presuppose or tacitly assume it at the outset."

2. "The principle which they employ as the master-key to all the phenomena of the world that of force or mechanical causality, is applicable only to inorganic nature, is inapplicable to organic or vital phenomena, and utterly

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3. Ibid., p. 79.



breaks down as an explanation of consciousness or intelligence."<sup>4</sup>

Now what is the rational necessity which should compel man to turn towards God and religion? Caird maintains that mere repudiation of materialistic theory does not go to show the necessity of religion. To prove the need of religion it is necessary to show that the upward movement of mind or the transcendent urge of the spirit is involved in the very nature or constitution of our inner self. And this assumption can be substantiated when we analyse the nature of the spiritual consciousness of man.

When we examine the entire content of nature and man we find that both of them are finite. But the finitude of nature is different from the finitude of man. The finitude of the physical nature is inevitable and material in the sense that it is bound by the laws of physical limitation and finitude. The things of material nature are only externally related and they all exist in space and time. Thus the individuality of things of nature is isolated from others; individual maintains its separate individuality against anything outside of it. Whereas the finitude of mind or spiritual consciousness is limited "only by that which is essentially one with itself, and which finds or realises itself in all by which it is limited." So the individuality of mind or spirit is an individuality which is constantly discovering in all things external to it the means of its own gradual development. So naturally every mind or spiritual consciousness involves an element of potential infinitude. The spiritual nature of man is the potential infinite to which it progressively aspires. Furthermore, it is the very characteristic of a spiritual being that it cannot be shut up within

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4. Ibid., pp. 87-88.



its own limited individuality. It necessarily participates in the life of the realm without, in the universal life of all spiritual beings. In this larger sense, love, sympathy, affection, trust, find their satisfying fulfilment and justification. The process of universalisation of the narrow individual self calls for the help of religion. The universalisation of the individuality does not mean the end of man's essential individual content. To be really ourselves we should be more than ourselves and in the larger, wider self we truly find our essential being. Caird writes—"What we call love is, in truth, the finding of our own life in the life of another, the losing of our individual selves to gain a larger self".<sup>5</sup> In this way the expanding spiritual life of ours gradually escapes the finitude of the individual self and approximates more and more to universal and unlimited life of the whole. Yet the ultimate goal is not reached on the empirical plane; the lasting unity of universal and individual life still remains an ideal to be realised in the infinite course of time. Our finitude often and on makes us aware of its presence in times of respite and intervals. The realisation of the universal life is often brief and ephemeral, which is continually disturbed by the recurring consciousness of our finitude. Yet in one sense, we are already in possession of the infinity; it is evident in the feeling that we know it to be our ideal heritage and we have a relation to it. Every man has limitless possibility and potentiality; he has the latent consciousness of God and infinity—the definite possibility of establishing an essentially organic relation to God.

We and our knowledge are limited but this limitation presupposes an actual transcendence of it. Our finitude

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5. Ibid., p. 116.



thus presupposes our infinity and unboundness. Similarly, the consciousness of our imperfection is only possible against the background of an absolute, transcendent perfect standard. The absolute basis of human consciousness and knowledge rests on the tacit assumption of an absolute criterion of them—the criterion which symbolises the universal consciousness of God. Therefore, the nature of man as a spiritual being involves the following things: (a) the inherent capacity of transcending the individuality and realising himself in the universality which apparently seems to limit him and is beyond all; (b) the potential consciousness of the “absolute unity of thought and being on which all finite knowledge and existence rest.” The first principle, Caird observes, signifies our perpetual impulse to transcend ourselves; the second points out a universal or Absolute Soul or Mind in the realisation of which the spiritual urge finds its fulfilment. In the above two things we discern the basis and necessity of religion in relation to humanity.

### III

We have already seen that, according to Caird, the basis of religion rests on man's nature as a thinking and self-conscious being. Man is a rational or spiritual being only by virtue of his ability to transcend his limited personality—to rise above feeling and emotion—to attain what is universal and objective. In thought the opposition between self and not-self is resolved and overcome and we rise above our individuality and enter the sacred realm of infinite universality. We feel as limited individuals but we think in the perspective of a universal life of reason. So thought alone endows man with the ability of thinking in universal terms and with the capacity of self-abnegation



and self-surrender to an infinite Being in which religion exists. In our thought we supersede ourselves; in our feelings we assert our individuality.

Thus religion, in the ultimate sense, is rooted in man's rational or intelligent nature. But this position does not lead us to the conclusion that religion is solely intellectual or rational thing, for, it has also the element of feeling. Yet there is no denying the fact that primarily religion has its seat in the rational part of the self as distinguished from the emotional or the volitional. Caird maintains that though the predominant source of religious consciousness is the rational side of man's nature, it cannot be claimed that religion belongs exclusively to the domain of the intellect. In fact the division of human consciousness into watertight compartments of will and emotion, feeling and thought, intellect and aspiration is not possible. Therefore, the question whether religion is specially a think of knowledge or feeling or volition or emotion religion springs from a false or defective psychology. Caird says—"The spiritual life and consciousness of man cannot be broken up, as this enquiry implies, into independent divisions or departments existing side by side".<sup>6</sup> The religious consciousness thus cannot be said to be activity of any one faculty to the exclusion of other cognate faculties. Every feeling or volition has an element of implicit knowledge just as knowledge is bound to have an element of feeling and volition. Hence various elements of religious consciousness necessarily involve one another and they represent a synthetic expression of a unified self.

And the central basis of the many-sided factors of religion and religious consciousness is thought which

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6. Ibid., p. 152.



includes also sensation, feeling, emotion and other allied notions. Thought runs through the spiritual consciousness like a thread, characterises and gives organic harmony to it. In religious experience the human being as the totality—as the unchanging unifying self is involved. All through the changing experience the permanent self or the unchanging element is the “I”—the conscious, thinking being to which experiences and consciousness are related. And this element of “I” is the permanent ground of religious life and consciousness and it is grounded on rational, intelligent part of man. Caird gives emphasis on the rational side of man’s life in connection with the religious consciousness for various reasons. The religious consciousness is universal and eternal because the object of religion is universal and eternal. So the universal and eternal aspect of human life can alone be worthy means of realising and experiencing what is eternal and infinite. A universal object is only comprehended by an organ which is itself universal and the universal organ of human being is his rational, intelligent and conscious nature. God and divine things, Caird holds, may rouse our feelings, may touch our emotions and awaken in us the urge for the divine; but our rational, intelligent nature alone can bring us into fruitful and lasting contact with the things unseen, eternal and universal.

In this way we can understand why religious consciousness of ours should have predominantly an element of thought. We have already pointed out that its presence does not mean that such consciousness necessarily reflects pure thought or scientific doctrine or a reasoned system of knowledge. Caird again goes to point out in detail why true religious consciousness should be embedded predominantly in rational side of man’s nature. We have seen



that Caird admits that true religious consciousness has an element of feeling. He also admits that pure knowledge without feeling is not religion. Moreover, it is felt that knowledge which forms the primary basis of true religion is accessible to all in some measure. But Caird rejects the assertion that the essence of religion solely rests on feeling to the exclusion of intellect and will; religion and its essence cannot bypass the factors of knowledge and practical activity. He repudiates the feeling theory on the following grounds.

Firstly, to place the essence of religion on feeling alone is fallacious; for, a religion of pure feeling will not know itself to be religion at all. Religion by feeling alone cannot justify its existence without reference to and rational concept of a recognised object. In religious feeling I am only aware of undefined emotions of joy or pain, exultation or depression. But feeling does not define or realise or explain the nature of objects of such emotions. Furthermore, here there is no standard outside of feeling with which one can judge the worth, reality and value of such objects. Mere emotions that excite me fail to characterise the objects of feelings and emotions. Again, within the sphere of feeling the rapture of the sensualist and the holy illumination of the saint stand exactly on the same level and one has as much justification as the other. Caird says—"If there be no common criterion, outside of feeling, to which we can appeal, any one man has as much right to his own religion as any other".<sup>7</sup> In other words, feeling in religious consciousness merely shows that religion is mine, a part of my experience. But the value or the worth of the experience as a proof of any religion is dependent

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7. Ibid., p. 162.



on my rational ability and spiritual standard. Feeling is valuable in religion mainly because it belongs to spirituality and spiritually self-conscious being.

Secondly, the feeling-theory is untenable because religion is essentially a relation between the human soul and the divine. As the divine is the infinite object we must have a corresponding factor in humanity which can to some extent deal with it and this requirement cannot be met with in feeling alone. For, feeling is individual, variable, and uncertain and it is thus incapable of entering into perfect relation with an object which is universal, immutable and supremely necessary. We have already touched the point. So the inescapable conclusion is this: Religion should remain a thing of the heart and feeling but to safeguard the essence and worth of religion we must have an objective standard to judge the value, reality and purity of religious emotions and feelings. The feelings of the heart must be examined by rational intelligent self before they are accepted as truths of religious consciousness. From this view-point Caird visualises the predominance of reason and intellect in the domain of religion.

Caird is of opinion that there are various forms through which the knowledge of the essence of religion may be attained. The knowledge of the essence of religion thus may be achieved without the help of difficult scientific process and knowledge gained in this way may suffice for moral and religious ends of common peoples. A spiritual man may gain it through the apprehension of a representative form—through significant facts and figures of religious importance. Material objects in space and time, actions, events, may become to us images and symbols through which we may contemplate things infinite and eternal. Through certain figurative, pictorial, suggestive



and metaphorical forms we may come to the knowledge of the divine. Similarly, natural phenomena such as sun and sky, moon and fire, spiritual ideals such as holiness, love, philosophical reflections, moral and ethical elements may give rise indirectly to the knowledge of religious essence. Knowledge thus attained may be imperfect and rudimentary—yet it is adequate for the wants of religious nature of common people for its gradual development in course of time. Such knowledge forms the basis for further evolution and development of religious consciousness and knowledge.

#### IV

The concept of a spiritual being involves not only the notion of self-consciousness but also the notion of self-determination. This means that my spiritual life is potentially given and it should be manifested and realised through struggle and free, self-assertion of my rational will. The element of self-activity is solely the prerogative of rational beings. Inorganic substances of nature exist as there are; they are absolutely given from the very beginning and determined by external forces over which they have no control. In living organisms we witness the beginnings of self-activity; a plant, for instance, has potential life of its own, which is not wholly shaped beforehand or predetermined by external forces and which grows according to the propulsion of the inner life. So its development follows from its self-activity. So also in the activity of the animals we see the "faint fore-shadowing of that free, self-development which is the prerogative of the spiritual life."

But the essential difference between the self-activity of a spiritual being and the self-activity of a plant or an



animal is that activity of the latter is blind and natural and that of the former is conscious and rational. The struggle of a plant or an animal with nature is a conflict between one natural blind force with another blind force of nature. But the struggle of a spiritual self is mainly an internal and conscious conflict between the lower self and the higher one. It is the strife of impulse with reason, desire with renunciation, individual urge with universal aspiration. Therefore, the inner conflict in the human beings is the very foundation of moral and spiritual or religious life. The conflict represents a very complex and deeply significant phenomenon and the solution of the entire problem is neither easy nor simple.

The conflicting elements are rooted in the same personality, the enemies cannot fly apart or co-exist or give up fighting peacefully. The urges and desires of the flesh are mine, the deep, true and universal spiritual consciousness is mine too in the true sense. So a rational, self-conscious being can never escape this conflict of nature and spirit, of impulse and reason, of the lower self with the higher self. Only through this long-drawn war the spiritual development of man can take place. For, moral and spiritual perfection does not come by nature spontaneously and naturally; it is attained only through the process of prolonged struggle and self-conquest. It is developed by the sustained reaction against nature and its forces. The very dawn of self-consciousness is the starting-point of the struggle and the victory of soul ushers in the true religious life in the end. Caird observes that the solution of this conflict is partially found in the moral development and fully and perfectly in religious life alone. First of all he discusses the nature and implications of the moral life.



There is in man a universal nature that transcends the limitations of all particular experiences; the possibility of moral life lies in this universal nature. Man is conscious that he is more than the sumtotal of desires and impulses, particular experiences and gratifications of senses and cravings. Otherwise man would have been satisfied with the life and appetite of an animal. The divine discontent makes the moral life possible, which can only flourish through struggle and effort. Man is endowed with thought, reason and self-consciousness and these things oppose the natural passions and desires. The higher self cannot rest satisfied until the lower propensities are conquered and transformed. This antagonism fulfils the law of inner necessity and helps the process of the manifestation of divinity in man. Reason in us points out the universal and boundless in us; the desire and impulses, and other things symbolise limitation and private world, isolation and accidental factors of our life.

Caird holds that the very existence of the conflict exhibits our spiritual nature and the possibility of its ultimate consummation. He says—"If man's animal desires were beginning and end of his nature, there would be in man no element of unrest;.....But that which makes man a spiritual being makes him also restless being. Reason is the secret of the divine discontent".<sup>8</sup> The conflict does not indicate a clash between the blind forces because reason fights for an end, which it knows perfectly well.

Man cannot serve two masters simultaneously. He cannot indulge in passions and desires and at the same time be spiritually high and perfect. A being cannot be ruled

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8. Ibid., pp. 255-256.



by reason and impulse simultaneously. But so long as man lives an ordinary life, so long as he indulges in natural cravings, the forces of the lower self are vague and undefined, hidden and mild. But the moment the higher principle of self-consciousness is awakened the lower forces lose their mildness and simplicity and become capable of intense power and hostility. When I become conscious of my higher nature I become for the first time in my life fully aware of the effectiveness and strength of the forces of my lower self. For, the very realisation of my nature of impulses and desires make them more than impulses and desires. The awareness of their baseness does not put an end to them. They still persist to dominate us and become very powerful because they now assume a new character of conscious self-indulgence. So there is no denying the fact that they are strong and attractive and are deeply rooted in the very nature of man.

How this contradiction between the higher and the lower elements can be solved? The answer to this vital question furnishes the key to man's life as a moral and spiritual being. The moral life tends to find solution of this contradiction between man's higher and lower self by transforming the lower into the organ "and expression of the higher". But is it possible to live simultaneously the life of the universal and the particular? Some are of opinion that we can live the life of the universal by giving up the life pertaining to the particulars. But Caird maintains that the universal life without the elements of particular experiences and realisation is nothnig but empty and abstract self-assertion. The universal life can olny be fruitful in the particular existence and acts, experiences and aspirations. This is the important fact which we should all remember.



That every human being is capable of living the life of the universal by transcending the narrow bonds of individuality is evident from the fact that man in his relations to other persons is capable of identifying himself and his life with the lives of other persons. The ability to love and sacrifice is the way through which a particular self escapes his limits and identifies his happiness with the happiness of others. Caird says—"Morality, or the moral life may be described as the renunciation of the private or exclusive self and the identification of our life with an ever-widening sphere of spiritual life beyond us".<sup>9</sup> When my personal and private self expands into a self that is common to all members of the unity of mankind I realise myself to be more than a private self and capable of a larger and fuller life of the universal.

First of all the moral laws present themselves as an external order to which I must submit. But true moral life begins when I realise that the moral order is a part and parcel of my being—when I realise it to be an inherent element of my inner life and not a foreign thing that has been imposed on me from without. When the moral life becomes spontaneously my second nature—when the moral life of society as a whole flows into me naturally without the feeling of compulsion, my moral nature reaches a fuller development through love and process of devotion. Then I identify myself with the social moral life of the nation or community—with the aims and aspirations of it. Finally, the capacity and scope of the moral life reach their culmination when I as the individual rise even above the organic life of my particular nation or community to identify myself with the moral life of the entire mankind the world

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9. *Ibid.*, p. 264.



over.. It involves the feeling of universal sympathy, the passion for justice, the love and selfless realisation of oneness of humanity and creation.

In the realisation of such universal life there should not be any conflict between the higher and the lower nature of man. The very element of conflict presupposes the possibility of its solution and transcendence. The consciousness of contradiction is only the inherent awareness of the implicit unity. The moral life should not be attained by the suppression of the lower nature of man. In the moral life there is no extinction of desires and impulses but they are transmuted and transformed into the willing vehicles of the manifestation of the moral life. Caird writes—"The extinct tendencies are not killed out, but are transfigured by the subduing dominating power of a new and higher principle".<sup>10</sup> The higher self presupposes the lower self and rises out of it; hence the perfection means that both the elements "are at once annulled and preserved—annulled in their isolation of abstraction, preserved in a higher and richer unity." In other words, the true moral life is achieved by the harmonious function of the two unified elements working jointly for the propagation of the moral life in the nature of man. The forced annihilation of natural tendencies and urges is not effective; similarly, abstract, purely subjective moral life is impossible. Our moral life is conditioned by our natural tendencies; our natural factors are the raw-material of our moral life and there can be no effective moral life without them. So the truth of the moral life lies in making them active for the cause of such noble life in practical life of humanity; the natural elements of human nature supply the material basis

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10. Ibid., p. 270.



of such life. Therefore, in moral life man should have feelings, passions, emotions, actions, particular experiences. But they are here transformed into the dynamic organs of a spiritual life. The universal nature of man thus seeks its higher ends through them and so rationalises and purifies them. The ideal, potential moral life is made actual, dynamic and concrete through them.

## V

So we find that in the moral life the solution of the contradiction between the natural and the spiritual, the individual and the universal nature of man is to be found. But we have remarked earlier that, according to Caird, the moral life is the partial solution of this contradiction because the highest result of such a life is only a never-ending approximation to that ideal life. The moral life "gives us, instead of the infinite only the negation of the finite." The highest aim of life consists in the factual realisation of the infinite ideal. The moral life is at the best an approximation to that ideal visualised. This life reveals to us the presence of our potential infinitude which is in us. The religious or spiritual nature of man has in it an implicit infinity and the moral life alone cannot materialise or actualise this infinity so far as the life is concerned. For, in the moral life man realises himself not as an infinite being but as progressively wider or larger life of being. In this life man is concerned with a definite form of infinitude's objective realisation. Hence "beyond the highest point to which the moral life of our age had attained there is ever a far off goal which recedes as we advance".<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, the perfect solution is to be found when we go beyond the sphere of morality into the sphere of

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11. *Ibid.*, p. 279.



religion. The essential characteristic of religious life is that it changes "aspiration into fruition, anticipation into realisation." In the religious life the ideal is attained in actuality and man is made the actual partaker of a divine, infinite life and reality. In the religious life the infinite ceases to be a far off ideal and becomes a present, living reality in the true sense of the term. Here God is not an unattainable transcendent object; He does not hover before us as a phantasmagoria of fancy. He is realised in real life by the vivid religious consciousness of the aspirant. In true or genuine religious consciousness the division between the spirit and its object, the ideal and the real, the actual and the potential vanishes away. Here the finite being attains its goal and becomes suffused and enveloped by the overpowering presence and the life of the infinite.

There is no denying the fact that the religious life like the moral life is a progressive life. But it is progressive in altogether different sense. The spiritual progress or advancement should not be confused with the physical movement of the objects in quantitative infinity like space. The quantitative infinite is a contradiction in terms. The spiritual infinity is like the infinity of thought and love, goodness and purity. So the infinite ideal of religion is an ideal which is eternally realised. It is not something foreign to us; it exists in the deepest recess of our being. Caird says—"The ideal of religion.....is an ideal in reaching and realising which, and only in doing so, does the finite spirit truly realise itself".<sup>12</sup> Hence to enter into religious life is to terminate all struggle and to live the life of religion. The religious life is fruition, the moral life is preparation; the religious life is realisation, the moral life is approxi-

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12. Ibid., pp. 283-284.



mation to the realisation; the religious life is fulfilment here and now, the moral life is a progressive movement towards that fulfilment; the religious life means beness, the moral life is the endeavour to become the beness.

In the life of religion the hope passes into certainty, struggle into conquest, effort and endeavour into contentment and fulfilment. The religious life is progressive but it is not progress towards but progress within the realm of the spirit. It is the attempt to appropriate the infinity which is already in our possession. The whole future of the religious life is given in the beginning in a potential form which is unfolded in course of time through the spiritual development of man. In the religious life too the raw material of desires and impulses, will and feeling are available; but they are now under the control and guidance of the divine principle within. Evil, error, imperfection do not belong to the truly religious man. They are not inherent factors but merely excrescences which have no organic relation to his real, higher nature.

A religious man may yet not be free from the temptation and conflict; he may still possess lingering factors of cravings; he may have to pass through temporary defeat and shame. But in the inner sphere of his spiritual existence where his true life is the war is already over and the victory is already gained. Those temporary defeats and depressions belong to his outward, empirical aspect of life; imperfection and finitude will remain in the sense that every individual is empirically and biologically not the whole, and that the life of God is greater than the life of the mortal. Yet in another sense, in the sense of qualitative infinity or spirituality no limitation does exist for him; a truly religious man is the expression of God on earth. Caird writes—"It is a divine spirit which animates and



inspires it. In all its activities it is a divine will that moves it. Every pulse-beat of its life is the expression and realisation of the life of God".<sup>13</sup> It is the life of complete surrender to the divine will; it is the expression of universal, infinite and spiritual ideal in space and time. It is the life fully and permanently enveloped by God and His manifestation in deeds, feelings and thoughts.

The religious life is not only a subjective phenomenon but also an objective manifestation in space and time. It expresses itself in unending stream of acts which form the basis of such dynamic life. The religious life reaches its culmination through the process of religious worship; it strengthens itself, fulfils and develops itself through devotion and prayer, the offices and rites, symbolic acts of worship and communion. These are the manifestations of religious life in its principle and essence, as a thing realised and complete. Caird maintains that though in one sense the religious life is the life of absoluteness with its divine ideal in biological and individual sense that ideal cannot be adequately realised in the world of space, time and causation. The life is temporal and empirically and biologically under the laws of limitation, which govern all earthly phenomena. Therefore, we cannot enjoy God-consciousness forever in one act of our ordinary existence. Hence the lasting satisfaction and bliss of the divine life so far as our earthly life and experience are concerned are bound to remain only a goal to be reached by a process perpetually renewed and never consummated and herein we feel the supreme need of religious worship.

In profound acts of worship we manifest the inward unity of spiritual life that is beyond all differences. In

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13. Ibid., p. 286.



acts of "devotion we gather up our fragmentary temporal life into its anticipated eternal harmony; we forecast and enjoy amidst the efforts and struggles of time, the sweetness and rest of the blessed life that is it to be".<sup>14</sup> Through religious worship man pictures the future end on the canvass of the present life. Through prayer we steadily rise beyond ourselves and private ends. Thus we enter into the realm of contentment and peace, harmony and unity where there are no discords and evils, illusions and deceptions of earthly existence. We pray in an infinite reality which is beyond the pale of ephemeral world of change and appearance. Similarly, in the realm of pure devotion the religious man rises above any desire or want. The aspirant then neither prays for personal safety, nor tries to invoke God's help to avert any spiritual evil or disaster of any kind. Prayers and acts of supreme devotion may be the vehicles of our immediate spiritual needs, of our penitence and gratitude, of our longing for spiritual strength and moral excellence. But in reality they stem from the conviction that for what we pray is already in our possession. Caird says that our prayer for spiritual improvement, for growth in faith, in purity, in knowledge, in love, is efficacious just because of the deeper conviction—the conviction that we are already perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect. This conviction is the very basis of our religious life. Caird says—"The world in which we outwardly live is only the unreal and the evanescent making believe to be real; the true, the real, the world of unchanging and eternal reality, is that in which we pray".<sup>15</sup>

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14. Ibid., p. 287.

15. Ibid., p. 288.



## VI

In the very idea of God lies the definite proof of the existence of God. That is, according to Caird, the ontological argument in support of the existence of God is the best possible argument under the circumstances. But the ontological proof is to be understood differently then it is generally understood by the people at large. Speaking about the real significance of the proof he says—"....the true meaning of the Ontological proof is this, that as spiritual beings our whole conscious life is based on a universal self-consciousness, an Absolute Spiritual life, which is not a mere subjective notion or conception, but which carries with it the proof of its necessary existence or reality".<sup>16</sup> The real meaning of the proof is that as spiritual beings our entire life is based on a universal self-consciousness or absolute spiritual life which is self-evident and self-existent and not a mere concept. It is a reality in the highest sense of the term; it carries within it the necessary evidence of its reality or existence.

Yet God should not be conceived as an infinite Being Who is merely the negation of the finite or Who is related to the finite universe by a bond of despotic and arbitrary will. Because if we think so then there is no room for the need of religion and the conscious, reciprocating relation of the human beings with the divine. But if, on the other hand, we conceive God as the infinite self-consciousness on which the conscious life of all finite beings is based and whose nature is to manifest itself in and to them, then "we have before us a conception of the nature of God and the nature of man which makes religion necessary by making it, in one sense, the highest realisation of both".<sup>17</sup> God is

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16. Ibid., p. 150.

17. Ibid., p. 150.



a unity of the finite and the infinite; he interpenetrates everything. In other words, God is the infinite that contains in it organic relation to the finite; God is related to the world and human beings. He expresses Himself through the finite minds but also is the ground of the transcendent infinity. Man as self-conscious religious being necessarily reflects the universal self-consciousness of God. So God, in the final analysis, is the spiritual and organic unity, for the spiritual unity is possible only as an organic unity.

## CHAPTER III

### FRIEDRICH PAULSEN ON RELIGION



*Religion, Philosophy And Science—Need Of  
Religion—Essence Of Religion—Forms Of  
Religion—Religious Faith—Morality, And  
Ethics—Prayer—God.*

"....the soul that ascends to worship the great God is plain and true; has no rose, colour, no fine friends, no chivalry, no adventure; does not want admiration; dwells in the hour that now is, in the earnest experience of the common day—by reason of the present movement and the mere trifle having become porous to thought and bibulous of the sea of light.....The faith that stands on authority is not faith. The reliance on authority measures the decline of religion—the withdrawal of the soul."

—Emerson—

#### I

The supreme aim of philosophy, Friedrich Paulsen holds, is to reconcile the religious view of the world with the scientific explanation of nature. He firmly maintains that religion, philosophy and science can harmoniously co-exist under certain favourable conditions. Philosophy can find fulfilment and supreme satisfaction only when science is reconciled with religion and its faith.

In the domain of philosophy an individual is a participant by the process of thinking; in the realm of religion



an individual is a participant by an act of faith. Man's religion is essentially his as something received from within and without; and man's philosophy is realised and created by his personal thought-process. Paulsen observes that the conflict between philosophy and religion has been mainly due to their close affinity and this hostility between them can be overcome if religion and philosophy come to fulfil certain valuable conditions and demands. The harmony of theirs must be a lasting one and not a mere compromise at the cost of truth and their essential content.

The first step towards such reconciliation is the endeavour to outline the precise definition of the problem of faith and science, philosophy and religion. Firstly, religion must cease to interfere with the business of science as it used to do in the past. It must grant full liberty of thought and action to science to carry on researches and investigations in the fields of natural and historical realities. Religion should not try to influence the results and findings of science or restrain the free evolution of scientific knowledge. For, such interference would be fatal to the world and humanity. In one word, religion must recognise and respect the proper work, knowledge and gifts of science and philosophy.

Science, on the other hand, should take its stand on the conviction that it can neither fully exhaust the entire reality, nor satisfy the deep emotional needs of man, which spring from inner recess of the soul. It should readily agree that it cannot supply the need of religion and there is sufficient room in the world for religion to exist side by side with science. Man is not satisfied with 'what' and 'how' of things; he inevitably asks the question pertaining to 'wherefore'. Philosophy, it is true, undertakes



the responsibility to answer this basic question but it is also another form of scientific knowledge which too cannot satisfy the heart of man by conceptual facts. Paulsen writes —“Hence the problem to interpret the meaning of things, not by the concepts of the understanding, but by sacred symbols which satisfy the heart is left to religion”.<sup>1</sup>

Originally, he holds that all three were one because causal explanation (science), theoretical exposition (philosophy) and ideal interpretation (religion) were one and the same thing in ancient religious mythology. Now they have assumed different meanings, contents and importance; now they have separated and gone are the days of unity; today they have gone on their individual ways regardless of their old, still-persisting basic unity. To-day science separated from religion attempts to offer the description and causal explanation of reality without trying to supply any ideal interpretation. Isolated religion likewise tries to offer faiths and dogmas without any scientific basis of their conceptual validity. Philosophy, occupying a middle position, seeks to outline the fundamental form and content of reality. But the isolated attempt at explanation cannot be conducive to the formation and realisation of true, all-round knowledge. Moreover, it cannot satisfy the heart and brain, emotion and rational understanding of man simultaneously. Happily science, philosophy and religion are now coming to realise the essential need of unity and co-operation; they have gradually come to recognise their respective limitations. However, in the final analysis, there is no denying the fact that reality represents a profound mystery whose hidden meaning religion can ultimately reveal in spiritual and metaphysical sense.

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1. Introduction To Philosophy, p. 10.



Yet we must remember that the lasting solution is only possible when religion fully decides to render openly unto science the fields that really belong to it. When this takes place science and philosophy will cease to be hostile and will come to recognise the need of religion. Religion, he maintains, is quite compatible with the rational temper and belief in humanity and social brotherhood of man. It has universal appeal and significance and it is not concerned with social and political parties of the day. In this wider sense it occupies a neutral and universal position in relation to any particular position.

Moreover, Paulsen does not visualise any conflict between religion and science because their diverse assertions about the world and men relate entirely to different aspects of reality. Secondly, the mission of science is to trace the facts and that of religion is to evaluate the system of values that result from facts or to measure their teleological manifestations. Thus it is not the business of religion to discover facts but only to affirm the basic significance of of such facts. Facts are revealed and discovered by science. Religious faith which is the expression of deep reality within us and which is beyond the pale of intellect, insists that the facts of science not only exist but have special worth and importance. In this way religion shows that the entire world which science reveals and ascertains is also the expression of the moral or spiritual order. This feeling of significance with which religion inspires us cannot be scientifically proved or explained because it is felt within and is not amenable to logical arguments.

The discord between philosophy and religion arises when "philosophy seeks to exclude faith, maintaining that the definitions of science comprehend and exhaust reality".<sup>2</sup>

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2. Ibid, p. 255.



The conflict occurs again when "a religion.....palms off its symbols as definitions and its articles of faith as scientifically demonstrable truths, and then demands that all thinkers fall into the same confusion under penalty of being branded as heretics or atheists".<sup>3</sup> In both the cases a deadly hostility is involved because the understanding intellect of man rebels against a religion which pretends to be the only acceptable science and the heart and emotion of man rebel against a philosophy that leaves no room for faith and devotion. But there is a way out of this confusion and co-existence of theirs is possible provided they fulfil certain conditions. So Paulsen writes—"A faith, however, that desires to be nothing but faith and a philosophy that is conscious of the limitations of human knowledge, can exist side by side".<sup>4</sup> It is quite natural that different individuals would incline either to philosophy or to religion according to individual temperaments and interests. But every person can and should appreciate, recognise and respect both vitally important phases of mental and spiritual life.

Both philosophy and religion can co-exist peacefully but we cannot have any forced synthesis of the two. Any attempt to equate philosophy with religion would be futile in the end. Similarly, the attempt to construct a philosophical religion or religious philosophy would meet the same unsuccessful end. For, religion after all consists in symbols and is not concerned with the definitions that go to form the basis of philosophy and science. These symbols are the results of a long historical growth; so symbols are not made overnight but they represent a continuous growth of the past into the present and future. These symbols are the life-blood of religion and represent the basic articles

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3. Ibid, pp. 255-256.

4. Ibid, p. 256.



of faith of the common people. Hence any attempt or endeavour by a critical philosophy to divest religion of its symbols and faith and to philosophise it by an abstract logical process will not be successful at all. Paulsen says—“An abstract religion like the systems that went under the title of rational or natural religion is an impossibility. All attempts made in this direction by particular thinkers are the dying ambers of a living, concrete, real religion”.<sup>5</sup> The symbols and sacred ceremonials, observances and concrete factors of religion are necessary to excite love and adoration, religious rapture and emotion and without them religion is bound to fade away in course of time.

## II

Paulsen maintains that generally the revolt against religion takes place when in the name of religion it is demanded that man must submit himself “not to the command of God, but to human dogmas.” Here the creed is made supreme and it becomes a bondage to man professing religion. It becomes a yoke by which to test a person's obedience to office and promotion and this naturally and inevitably rouses hatred and a sense of revolt against the oppressive method. Secondly, the revolt takes place when religion is converted into a pseudo-scientific system for whose formulae unconditional recognition is demanded. The modern, freedom-loving conscience rebels against such attempt to subject it to such dogmas that are not God-given but man made. Thirdly, the revolt takes place when man is not allowed to go through the sacred scriptures freely and independently, when he is not permitted to appreciate, study and evaluate them according to his test and ability

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5. Ibid, p. 330.



in the light of his own judgement and free inclination. Paulsen says—"Police compulsion and impertinent prescriptions concerning what we ought or ought not to think and feel have made them unbearable".<sup>6</sup> In other words, any form of compulsion is bound to produce hostile reaction in the modern mind.

But in spite of this revolt against orthodox and standard religions the basic need for religion itself is as strong and as persistent as ever. It is inconceivable that the religious life would absolutely perish. But some persons hold that religion is on the wane because philosophy and science have to a certain extent undermined its power and appeal. They believe that the final outcome of the conflict between religion and science will usher in the triumph of the latter. Paulsen does not subscribe to this view. He thinks that it is true that the old, mythological religion is on the decline; belief in gods and demons who often intervene to disturb the events of phenomena of the universe is now outdated; the hold of dogmatic and dictatorial religion is visibly weak to-day so far as the modern people are concerned. Yet religion itself cannot die out from this earth because humanity will not ever be satisfied with the scientific explanation of his inner relation to reality or God. The need of Religion is everlasting; religions may come and go but Religion lives on for ever.

If man were purely an intellectual being he would have been satisfied with the partial knowledge that science promises to reveal. But man is above all a creature of will and feeling and religion is deeply rooted in the will and feeling of humanity. Paulsen maintains that man's attitude to reality is determined mainly by feelings of humility, reverence,

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6. Ibid, p. 335.



yearning after perfection which result from heart's contemplation of nature and history of the world. Hence these feelings are of greater value than the concepts and formulae of science. Paulsen says—"Out of these feelings arises the trust that the world is not a meaningless play of blind forces, but the revelation of a good and great being whom he may acknowledge as akin to his own innermost essence".<sup>7</sup> The very essence of true religious belief is this instinctive assurance that the true nature of reality manifests itself in that which I love and respect as the greatest and the best. It is the undying certainty that the good and the perfect to which the longing of human will is directed constitutes the origin and the aim of all things.

Science can never destroy this feeling of certainty which springs from will and not from rational understanding; religion is rooted eternally in this will of man. The understanding—the seat of science, has nothing to do with the question of good and bad, valuable and valueless; it only distinguishes the real from the unreal, the true from the false. It objectively registers the process of phenomena and is indifferent to their values. But man is definitely more than a registering machine; his nature reacts to phenomena in diverse ways and means. So man has not only science but also poetry and art, faith and religion, aesthetics and other moral and spiritual things. Furthermore, his own life and future destiny present to him the factors of great and far-reaching importance and significance. His life has a deep meaning for him; his life is dynamic and directed towards the fulfilment of something which is not yet visible but which is projected into the future by the compulsion of his will. He wants to realise that something, to attain

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7. Ibid, p. 8.



it in this very life at all cost because his very destiny attains its end in the realisation of that something. Therefore, it is the eternal, inherent destiny of man to envision an end to the realisation of which he directs his entire being and energy. The possibility of the realisation of that end is based on an article of faith that springs from religion. Paulsen writes—"Whoever devotes his life to a cause believes in the cause, and this belief, be his creed what it may, has always something of the form of religion".<sup>8</sup>

Religious faith thus tends to establish an inner connection between the real and the valuable in the realm of history; in other words, religion equates reality with value in the highest sense. It believes that the process of history unfolds a universal principle of reason which upholds justice and goodness, favours the righteous and punishes the wrong-doers. This immanent reason stands for the victory of truth over falsehood, right over wrong, virtue over vice. Paulsen observes that nothing can hinder man from holding such religious beliefs. It is neither illogical nor wrong to have faith in the better future of mankind, in the triumph of truth, honesty and goodness of humanity in days to come.

Again, the need for religion is strong because the undefined but intense yearning for an infinite and all-good Being is an inherent and permanent longing of the soul. Man can never be satisfied by the material gifts of life, by the empirical world of forms and experience. In the deepest moment of his life man is haunted by the mystic whisperings from the unknown, imperishable eternal. The moments of such experience may be brief and vague, nevertheless they leave behind an indelible impression of the

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8. Ibid, pp. 8-9.



other world that constantly touches the human life at various points. The influence of the other world makes man discontent with earthly riches, with the finite and the trivial. Man is not content with knowledge, he longs for fuller, freer, spiritual life. Fortunately the modern man has outgrown his indifferences to religion and he is not content with the achievements of the physical world. He has, at last, slowly and gradually returned to the fold of religion and he yearns now for a true religious opening in his life.

Finally, religion cannot die because in the following three basic things it has its immortal, living roots, fear, joyful admiration and disappointment. These three emotions, Paulsen thinks, are essentially roused in the heart of man by the eternal spectacle of life and death. Religion is immortal because the undying emotions are roused and kept alive and vital by the ever-recurring drama of life and death. He writes—"Not until these emotions die out will religion die; not until then will pure knowledge rule the day".<sup>9</sup>

### III

Paulsen says that there are three different ways of explaining the origin of religion. One hypothesis maintains that the origin of religion can be traced to the causal instinct or the theoretical impulse of man. Religious emotions may be roused by the human desire to find out or detect the cause of all phenomena and events that we witness in the fields of nature. The undeveloped mind's desire to find the causes of phenomena is satisfied by the concept of fetish. In developed and mature minds this desire for causes of things gives rise to speculations and abiding spirit of enquiry

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9. Ibid, p. 327.



into deep causal factors of life and world, which ultimately give rise to the notions of higher religions. The second explanation finds the origin of religion not in the enquiring intellect of man but in his will. So pragmatically the origin of religion is traced to the practical needs of man. The will motivated by the propulsion of necessity strikes out for a religion which would satisfy the religious needs of man as well as the emotional urges of his. In this intelligence plays a meagre role in comparison to will and feeling. Intelligence only goes to supply to will the idea of a super-natural power or god on which or whom will can act. The third view holds that the origin of religion can be traced to the faith in the immortal existence of departed souls and spirits. Paulsen holds that these three explanations do not run counter to one another but supplant one another.

Religion is not knowledge—so it should not be confused with knowledge. Religion is not history or philosophy; it cannot be also equated with religious observances and acts, rites and rituals, worship and other allied things. Religion finds popular and concrete manifestations through them but it is not any kind of action. The essence of religion, Paulsen observes, can be traced to a peculiar but vital “disposition of the heart.” This disposition generally expresses itself in two habitual emotions namely humility and trust—humility and fear in the presence of God and trust in God.

Humility is the emotion roused by the feeling of insignificance in the presence of the sublime—the feeling of finitude in the overwhelming presence of the infinity. The infinitesimal man is placed in a world of stupendous grandeur and immensity; the immeasurable infinity hems him in on all sides. He is in the midst of infinite sky and horizon, restless ocean and awful mountain, unbound space



and fathomless time. The religious man becomes aware of his own insignificance in the midst of tremendous vastness of the immeasurable. This over-powering presence of the living infinity makes him vividly conscious of his own tiny life and infinitesimal being. He is compelled to visualise himself as a transitory being undergoing endless birth and death, a victim of hundred natural calamities and haunting vicissitudes over which he has no control. This profound, awe-inspiring feeling is the theme of all religions of the world. Otto calls this feeling 'creature feeling' and Schleiermacher calls it the feeling of 'absolute dependence.'

The other side of humility is trust—the certainty that the tremendous reality is not only immense, eternal and omnipotent but also supremely good and propitious for mankind. This realisation rouses in man a feeling that he can safely and unhesitatingly entrust himself to this Reality or Divine Principle. For, it is not only infinite but also all-good. Paulsen holds that the emotion of trust is the fundamental factor of true religion and religious life and consciousness. Apart from these feelings religion is rooted in the three feelings of emotion namely, fear, joyful admiration and disappointment. These emotions, we have earlier seen are continually roused and preserved by the age-old phenomenon of life and death.

Fear and distress are the fundamental roots of religion; they have been the source of magic and primitive forms of religion. Man's relation to suprasensuous Being is conceived through them. Even to-day, Paulsen observes, the fear of death and the apprehension of pain of death are powerful enough to compel us to pray—to kneel in supplication before the unknown might of the unseen. The premonition of death of one's own being and that of near and dear ones is the strongest emotion which impels man to



invoke the benediction of the divine and to seek shelter in its haven against the inevitable reality of annihilation. Realisation of the inexorable annihilation of every thing sensual and phenomenal naturally forces the self to fall back on something which is beyond this eternal process and which is immortal and benevolent to all.

In rapture and admiration we have another root of religion of all times. When a happy healthy man sees himself as the source of wonderful vitality and strength, action and happiness, youth and prosperity his emotions spontaneously break forth into gratitude for some unknown Being. Similarly, the contemplation on nature and its radiant forms of beauty, its vastness and multiform manifestations rouses in man a feeling of infinity. Nature and its various phenomena point to a greater and higher Being of which nature seems to be a creation and expression. Or again, when we reflect upon the gigantic achievements of mind and intellect, on magnificent creations of art and poetry, on lives of the great and the good, the brave and the saintly the heart is filled with emotion of the beautiful and the sublime, the holy admiration and deep veneration. These emotions naturally turn the soul towards the all-good and the perfect One, towards the source and origin of all these enchanting manifestations.

In feelings of disappointment and world-weariness we have another source of religion. These feelings find their dominant expressions in the religious emotions of salvation. These feelings reveal the reaction and recoil of an expectant soul to the world of realism and failure, disappointment and misery, despair and depression. Life is not a rosy dream of fantasy, it is not a bed of roses. It is hard and cruel; it is full of dangers and pitfalls; it filled with the lamentations of the youth and the fear of death.



Romantic ambitions and hopes, aspirations and expectations flounder on the rocks of dismal failure; the noble ideals visualised, new utopia envisioned often remain unattainable and often they are torn into shreds by the forces of darkness and evils. Conceit, base impulses, selfishness, hatred, enmity, hypocrisy fill the fair face of the earth where lurk behind the mask of righteousness, the vulgar propensities of decadent flesh. Hence out of bitter disappointment of hopes unrealised, of promises broken, of dreams shattered, of visions unattained a religious feeling is born, which turns man from this baneful realm towards a better kingdom of salvation. Out of disgust man abandons this world for a superior one; and the mind thus "flies from the hardness and self-righteousness, the baseness and deceit of man to the heart of God".<sup>10</sup> This feeling, Paulsen holds, can be found in all idealistic philosophy and religion. From this conception also springs the concept that the world is not the real world, it is an appearance and the true reality is beyond the hazy atmosphere of sense and matter. In this way man seeks consolation in God and ceases to rely on man and to build his hopes and aspirations on anything vain and illusory.

The disappointment is also born of realisation that the earthly riches and enjoyment, prosperity and fame cannot give any enduring contentment and permanent realisation of values. Religious man finds at last the fact which has been experienced thousands of times by the kindred spirits, that the material gifts of life cannot satisfy the heart and soul of man. All grand purposes and desires to win beauty and truth, all noble ambitions of freedom and liberty, all honour and position and wealth are finally lost in darkness

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10. Ibid, p. 328.



and confusion of death. And the world-weary soul to whom everything worldly seems to be dull and drudgery yearns for redemption and looks heaven-ward in the crucial hour of his life; this signifies the birth of a religion in his heart. Such mainly are the feelings, emotions and experiences that go to form the origin of religion in human life.

#### IV

Paulsen observes that it is customary in the natural history of religion to outline three essential stages in the development of belief in God, namely fetishism (also called spiritism, animism) polytheism and monotheism. The common factor of these three stages is the faith in a supramundane Being that acts upon the phenomenal world.

Fetishism is prevalent among the savages of the world. A fetish is any given object in which lives a magic power or spirit. The object receives attention from the savage who places before it food and drink. In return he wants protection from enemy and death, evil and natural calamities, magic and all kinds of misfortunes. Natural, animal and human objects can be fetishes. Fetish-worship also involves the worship of the departed souls of the ancestors. This is the primitive form of religion with primitive magic, priests and ceremonials to propitiate the spirits and to get in return earthly and spiritual benefits. Paulsen observes that fetishism's concomitant is Shamanism or necromancy.<sup>11</sup> Shamanism is essentially based on magic and sorcery. In them we find a very crude form or concept of God or gods as the creator or creators of the world and man.

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11. Necromancy: the art of revealing future events by calling up and questioning the spirits of the dead.



Polytheism is the second essential form of religion. Paulsen writes ".....it differs from the first in this, that in it the suprasensuous element assumes the form of personal beings".<sup>12</sup> Here we have a clear-cut, fixed picture of historical gods and goddesses whose functions and nature are well-defined. The main characteristics of these polytheistic gods and goddesses are as follows. Their physical and spiritual nature exhibits the general characteristics of human beings. They are exalted beings but have the same human limitations of anger, love, hate, weakness. Yet the physical laws of space and time, life and death, youth and old age are not applicable to them. They represent eternal youth and beauty, they have unearthly power, they can fly through the air and command sun and moon, thunder and tempest. In the wider sense they represent and reflect the historical life and evolution of nations and human races. Pøulsen thinks that three elements can be distinguished in the nature and character of these gods and goddesses, namely personified magic, personified natural forces, and personified ideals.

Lastly, the last and third fundamental form of religion is monotheism. This form of religion has originated in historical times and through historical personages. Secondly, it tends to spiritualise the divine element. The spirits and gods and goddesses of fetishism and polytheism are frankly sensuous and supersensuous beings. Monotheism clearly and entirely removes the sensuous or super-sensuous (here too sensuousness lingers) part from religion. Thus it signifies a major departure from the other two. It visualises God as spiritual, incorporeal and impersonal Absolute which is beyond any sensuous fancy

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12. Ibid, p. 268.



or imagination. This position divests God of His anthropomorphic character and with the disappearance of human limitations of every kind God ceases to be a particular being in space and time. Each nation or race has its own gods and goddesses; but in monotheism gods and goddesses become one, omnipresent and universal God belonging to all mankind. So all great monotheistic religions preach universalism and stand for internationalism which are foreign to polytheistic religions. From historical standpoint monotheism is the evolutionary result of polytheism.

Paulsen thinks that only historical form of religion can give lasting satisfaction to religious faiths of humanity; religious emotions and cravings of man find their maximum satisfaction in the religious manifestations of historical religions. Religious forms down the ages have been historical growth according to human needs and reactions to life, temperaments and aptitudes. Religion cannot be invented or formed by the ideas and images of the individuals at their sweet will. He thinks that man demands that his own religion should arise him beyond his limitations and weakness and needs, should help him in times of misfortune and gloom and place him on firm and secure grounds permanently. Paulsen writes—"A historical religion, the faith in which his fathers lived and died, can alone accomplish that".<sup>13</sup> Man is associated from his birth and childhood with living religious symbols out of which he has shaped the world of his religious conviction and reality. So when in mature age the need for religion throbs in the heart those old feelings of association are rekindled in his bosom. This gives his religious thoughts a solid stability and coherence because he has learnt to fashion his

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13. Ibid, p. 329.



lite in the light of life-long convictions gained from childhood. Thus the symbols with which man is associated so long a period naturally, instinctively become his sheet-anchor amid the clashes of ever-changing ideas and theories, doctrines and systems of theologians. Therefore, the germ of historical and popular religions is transmitted from generation to generation through the ages. Paulsen says—"Religion exists and can exist only in the form of concrete popular religions that have grown historically and express themselves in symbols and sacred ceremonies".<sup>14</sup>

Abstract or philosophical religions without living symbols and concrete factors are bound to be of no use to common people the world over. A religion may assimilate new ideas and elements; the old trunk may throw out hundred new shoots but religion can be subtly philosophised at its own peril. Paulsen warns the scholars who want to construct new religions by means of abstract ideas and philosophy. For all the practical purposes religion rests on concrete symbols—not on definitions or knowledge. It is grounded on experience and does not originate from thought alone. Yet religion in order to flourish and inspire peoples must possess the transcendent element. Religion without transcendent factor is nothing and ineffective. By popular and historical religion, Paulsen does not mean polytheistic religion but a popular religion with living symbols on the basis of monotheistic concepts of God. Therefore, popular religion should not see in God a historical personage or an empirical man, for, that would be fatal to it. Man may admire and love a historical hero but true religious feeling is only roused by the presence and vision of the cosmic, universal and transcendent Being. The object of

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14. Ibid, p. 330.



religion is not the adoration of man but the adoration of God in all His immense, transcendent majesty and grandeur.

Paulsen concludes that religion with the transcendental urge on the one hand and living, concrete symbols on the other in the true sense is not incompatible with rational philosophy or science. It symbolises the true, free factors of thought. True religion does not demand that one should think what cannot be thought; it only sincerely wants us to believe what satisfies the heart and will and what does not run counter to reason or contradict it; it stands for a way of faith and conduct.

## V

Faith in religion does not mean knowledge which is merely vague or uncertain. Paulsen writes—"Religious faith is the immediate certainty of the heart that the real is derived from the good, that everything that happens is meant for the best, for my best".<sup>15</sup> This faith does not rest on theoretical speculations and proofs; it does not spring from reason or understanding; it has its being in the will of man. The religion gives rise to religious faith which is comparable to the mother's faith in her son. She believes with all her heart that her son's well-being and prosperity are forever secured. Thus she believes not with logic or reason but with her heart and will just as a man has faith in his nation. The validity of this faith cannot be logically established by facts and evidences; it springs from her or his inner being and heart.

Similarly, the religious faith is rooted in man's essence and will. It mainly consists in the trust that the reality of which I am a part is essentially good and possesses a

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15. Ibid, p. 245.



rational meaning which I am confident to realise or unravel. This faith sustains the conviction that a man's and world's destiny is not subject to aimless accidents or random fortuity but is shaped and determined by God Who is propitious and ever-benevolent. The religious faith first appears in a crude, primitive form of religion and belief in powers of good over evil, in ability of powers to ward off evils and to promote what is noble and favourable. Paulsen says—"This trust reaches its final form in the belief that there is an all-governing Providence without Whose will nothing happens, by Whose will everything that happens makes for the good".<sup>16</sup> First of all I have faith in my own life and destiny and the immediate surroundings. I feel that my destiny is assured and the pain and misfortune that beset my path are only the means of my self-purification and preparation for the ultimate glorious end. This faith naturally and gradually is universalised to embrace the belief in the whole of mankind and a belief in universal well-being and redemption.

The religious faith should not be confused with a theoretical truth. It is not the culmination of teleological arguments drawn from the history or the life of the individuals. This faith springs from the practical needs of man to make life tolerable in the face and midst of grim sufferings and misfortunes. The faith reconciles man with his lot, keeps up the hope of final happy end, and gives man a philosophy of life which goes to offer reliable security in the midst of confusion, uncertainty and frustration. The religious faith is not shaken by apparent failures and monotony of momentary disappointments; it visualises them as the necessary means of ultimate redemption. It needs no

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16. Ibid, p. 246.



proof and is impervious to doubt and suspicion. And regardless of repeated failures and wrecks of hopes it forges ahead towards the supreme goal. It is imperishable and flexible and eternally grounded on the deepest and immortal conviction of the believer.

Paulsen writes—"Such in general is the content of religious faith. It is never realised in this abstract form, but only in concrete embodiments. Faith is comprehensible and transmissible only when expressed in the intuitive ideas and symbols of historical religions".<sup>17</sup> Faith when expressed in the intuitive ideas and symbols of historical religions becomes open to reflective thought. When the content of spontaneously expressed religious faith about God are reflected upon and are comprehended in its relation to us a doctrine of faith is evolved. When a community having a common faith formulates and crystallises its articles of faith dogmas and creeds come into existence.

## VI

Paulsen is of opinion that misunderstanding about morality and its laws is due to the mistaken notion of the nature of morality. The moral law, he maintains, is not foreign to our nature and inner being and it is not also imposed on us from without by a despot. It is the law of our being; hence morality is a natural and human factor in our life. Paulsen thinks that we may or may not assign to these laws a transcendental significance or colouring. The moral laws and their observance ensure the health and welfare of the individuals while their conscious or unconscious violation causes ill-health, deterioration and degradation in all spheres of life. So the moral laws are natural

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17. Ibid, p. 248.



laws of human life in the sense of being the conditions of its well-being and improvement. Paulsen writes—"According to the natural cause of events, their transgression will bring upon nations as well as upon individuals misfortune and destruction, while their observance is accompanied by welfare and peace".<sup>18</sup>

The moral laws have nothing to do with the theories of materialism or idealism. These laws are valuable to man regardless of what he thinks about them. Just as whoever violates the laws of dietetics will pay the penalty by ill-health so also whoever violates these laws will pay for it with his own life's happiness. Therefore, as long as the universe is what it is and human nature remains as it is the moral laws will remain in power whether one conceives reality as composed of atoms or souls or whatnot. The laws are not invented by the moralist and morality should find expression in action. In so far as man is aware of these laws he possesses the element of conscience. This conscience develops and widens with the growth of mental and spiritual life of man. Paulsen thinks that in conscience, in the consciousness of the moral laws we become conscious of our real essence. The highest mental life is the central aim of all reality. In this connection it is pertinent to remember that the real prophets always battle for higher morality which is opposed to popular morality of particular times and places. The higher morality becomes the individual ideals of life as opposed to common ideals of the day.

We must remember that the moral laws do not presuppose pre-determinism; freedom and causality do not conflict; freedom does not mean exemption from law. Law

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18. *Ibid*, p. 71.



upholds coherent uniformity, principles and finally without this law there will be no stability and permanent values in this world. But what is the final aim or the highest good for the sake of which everything is desired? Paulsen is of opinion that the highest good consists in trying to achieve the highest objective content of life. We should not seek the highest good in subjective feeling alone but in specific mode of life. He calls this view 'energism'. Energism aims to seek an objective form and activity of life which would symbolise the highest exercise of virtues and capacities. He calls conscience the phase of our nature which judges the righteousness and wrongness of our acts and thoughts.

There are mainly two standards by which we can measure the moral worth of our volitions and actions. The first holds that the natural and inherent moral law is the standard of moral worth; the second holds that the effect of the acts upon the welfare of all concerned is the standard of the moral worth. Paulsen subscribes to the latter view and according to him the goal of humanity should be a specific type of life and activity which are directed towards the realisation of an objective content for which the humanity is predisposed. And the task of ethics is to set forth in broad outlines the form of life for which the human nature is predisposed. He says—"This task is performed in the doctrine of virtues and duties, the concrete form of which is determined by people and times." Ethics thus is related to life and it will explain moral evil or the bad as dietetics explains laws of health and ill-health. It is the duty of ethics to explain the values of morality from practical, pragmatic and biological viewpoints. Actions, effects, consequences on life are of supreme



importance in the life of individuals and mankind as a whole.

## VII

Paulsen recognises the need of prayer and its efficacy under certain conditions. Prayer stands at the root of religion. In the hour of need man naturally and spontaneously turns to God in prayer to invoke His grace and supernatural aid to ward off ills of life. But Paulsen thinks that prayer as an inner function of the soul has "effects on the soul-life" of man. We may recall that Spinoza holds the same view. But Paulsen does not believe that prayer can deflect a streak of lightning or a bullet from its path. The value of prayer, he holds, should be decided and settled through experience and experiment and statistical device. He deprecates the tendency to give prayer undue importance. Prayer cannot give material gifts and advantages; it is effective only in the inner realm of soul-activity. Truly religious man does not want God to act according to his desire. Paulsen thinks that the presupposition of prayer should be as follows: our heavenly Father knows what we need and every prayer should conclude thus: not my will, but Thy will be done. Finally Paulsen writes—"Its aim is not to conquer nature by supernatural means, but to conquer the human heart, which wavering between defiance and despondency, is not able to yield and adapt itself to its faith".<sup>19</sup>

## VIII

Paulsen firmly believes in idealistic monism. According to this view the entire universe is spiritual in parts

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19. *Ibid*, p. 261.



as well as in its totality. The nature of the Being is to be realised by the analogy of our own immediately experienced life. William James calls his philosophy 'psycho-physical monism'. Paulsen envisions God as all-good and the entire universe as His manifestation. He does not visualise nature as the antithesis of God but as part and parcel of the one cosmic Deity; he preaches not pantheism (all-god) but panentheism (all in God). The universe or creation is God's manifestation; so we should see all-good in the all-real. But creation does not exhaust Him because He is still beyond the creation even when He fully and inseparably envelops it.

Exact knowledge of the supreme essence of God is beyond us; Paulsen is certain and sure that no body can give exact or exhaustive definition of the inner reality of the all-real God. Similarly, God's thought and volition can never be conceived or grasped by the human mind and intellect. We cannot ascribe to God such functions as will, impulses, feeling. God has no need hence no craving in the human sense; there are no objects outside of Him because He is already everywhere. He has neither action nor moral activity or quality. In Him volition and execution are simultaneous; He thinks and simultaneously thought is transformed into reality. In short no attribute or quality which involves human or material element can be applicable to God.

He is both immanent and transcendent; He is in the world—yet extends far beyond. He pervades the finitude—yet is infinite and transcendental. Paulsen maintains that the immanency and transcendency do not exclude each other. Even theism cannot rule out the immanency of God in the universe. He says—"The nature which we see is finite, God is infinite; it is merged in Him, but He is not merged



in nature. The world known to our cosmology is but a drop in the ocean of reality".<sup>20</sup> But it may be asked—If God is impersonal and transcendent does not the cause of religion suffer, which mainly is based on man's personal relation to God?

Paulsen answers that purely personal relation like the relation between man and man is not possible so far as God and man are concerned. But just as a man has personal relation with his nation for which he battles and works, a pious man can have relation with God on the same basis arising out of devotion and feeling of adoration. In such relation God's personality is not essentially necessary factor just as a nation's personality is not involved necessarily in the relation between a nation and a patriot. A religious man lives for the glory of God; the brave crusader regards himself as God's warrior; a missionary thinks himself to be a fellow-craft in the kingdom of God. Thus one can derive maximum benefit from such active and living relation with God.

Again, a religious man's realisation of and relation with God does not rest on philosophical concept but on faith and feeling. God's immanence does not vitiate His being because His essence is rooted in His transcendent aspect which is beyond all. In this connection it is pertinent to remember that all transitory phenomena are symbols of reality and all symbols are not intelligible to us. Therefore, we should adore ones which are visible and intelligible to us and not try to pry unsuccessfully into the hidden mysteries that will remain forever unknown to us. And this attitude does not debar us from enjoying the true religious consciousness and fruitful relation with God. This

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20. Ibid, p. 257.

attitude makes for peace and contentment, unwavering faith in God and religion. Therefore, Paulsen proposes to adhere to the famous dictum of Goethe: man's highest happiness as a thinker is to have fathomed what can be fathomed, and to bow in reverence before the unfathomable.



## CHAPTER IV

### SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON RELIGION



*Origin Of Religion—Essence Of Religion  
Parts Of Religion—Other Characteristics Of  
Religion—Religion And Science—Need Of  
Religion—Religious Life—Universal Religion.*

"Religion presupposes and reveals man as inevitably moved by and in travail with the sense of and thirst after truth, the truth, reality, the reality. Man cannot renounce this sense and thirst as an illusion; the very dignity and passion that accompany or foster, at any time, his declaration of such illusion, ever imply such ontology—that there somehow exists a more than human truth and reality, and that man somehow really experiences it."

—*Von Hugel*—

#### I

Swami Vivekananda points out that various speculations are current about the origin or beginnings of religion. Of all the surmises the two theories about the origin of religion have gained importance in modern times. They are the spirit-theory which maintains that the ancestor-worship is the starting point of religion and the theory which holds that religion "originates in the personification of the powers of nature."

The first theory subscribes to the view that the desire for ancestor-worship rouses in primitive man a feeling

which is akin to the nascent religious consciousness. It has been the nature of man to attempt at the perpetuation of the memory of his dead ancestors. This feeling springs from his inborn belief that the ancestors are living even when their bodies have dissolved. So he longs to look after the dear departed souls by placing food for them and worshipping them with awe and reverence. The worship is motivated by fear, love and feeling that propitiated spirits would act favourably. Out of this process, a group of scholars thinks, religion has come into being. The traces of ancestor-worship are found in the religions of the ancient Egypt and Babylonia, China and primitive races of America. Among the early Hindus the relics of this type of religion are found.

The second theory visualises in the forms of nature-worship the origin of religion. Explaining the romantic origin of nature-worship Swamiji<sup>1</sup> observes that human mind has a tendency of persistent enquiry; it refuses to accept anything at its face value or what is merely apparent. It longs to go beyond the events and outward manifestations of natural phenomena. The dawn and the evening, the storm and the tempest, the thunder and the lightning, the immense sky and the restless ocean, and various other wonderful, variegated beauties and mysteries of nature have exercised on human mind and imagination strange fascination and influence since time immemorial. Man has penetratingly reacted to these phenomena and aspired to envision the underlying reality of theirs in order to fathom their real significance and reality. And in his attempt to know man assigns to phenomena personal attributes of soul and body, and both baneful and benevolent qualities and powers.

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1. Henceforward Swami Vivekananda will be mostly referred to as 'Swamiji'.



Thus gradually by a process of abstraction the physical forces are transformed into gods and goddesses; the material phenomena are personified and deified. The traces of nature-worship are found in the religions of ancient Greece and Rome, Germany and other Aryan races. In the Rig-veda of the Hindus one can discern its distinct vestiges.

Swamiji is of opinion that both the theories are equally strong and possess equally powerful ground for their prevalence. But he thinks that these two apparently contradictory views can be reconciled on a third basis which, according to him, is the ultimate source of religion. He says—"These two views.....can be reconciled on a third basis, which to my mind is the real germ of religion and that I propose to call the struggle to transcend the limitations of senses".<sup>2</sup>

The very act of worship of the dead ancestors presupposes the transcendence of physical limitations. It involves the idea of immortality of spirits who are considered to be free from the shackles of bodily failings. Man in this case is neither satisfied nor disheartened by the inevitable fact of death. He undauntedly aspires to understand what lies beyond and to commune with his dead ancestors. He opposes the idea of mortality with the nascent vision of immortality, the fact of death with the conviction that somehow the spirit or soul perpetually survives. Similarly, man's desire to worship the natural forces springs from his urge to comprehend the significance or Reality of these visible phenomena. He is not satisfied with the mere outward and apparent manifestation of things. He longs to realise that Something which he believes to be the controller of things and events.

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2. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. 3, p. 59.



Therefore, one thing is very clear and certain that man has never been contented with the things of the world as they are or as they appear to be. His questioning, doubting self has always struggled to break through the capacity and captivity of senses and things, events and senses. In other words, man is the possessor of an eternal, forceful and untrammelled urge for the unknown and things infinite. This transcendental urge, Swamiji thinks, is the true source of all religion. It is the quest for Reality—a quest for stable and universal values and ultimate realisation of values that symbolise Reality. The transcendental urge stands at the root of religion. There is nothing mysterious in this element because it is the most natural component of human nature. In the evolutionary progress of religious ideas and consciousness this urge has played and is still playing a conspicuous role. We must remember this important fact.

Discussing the role of fear in the early formulations of religion, Swamiji opines that fear has been undoubtedly a contributing factor at the beginning. Almost all primitive forms of religion are dominated by the element of fear; but as religion advances and matures it gradually shakes off the element of fear and then finally culminates in universal love.

## II

Religion begins when man is dissatisfied with the life and world surrounding him, with the realm of things known and aspires to go beyond. The divine discontent is the starting point of religious consciousness. Generally man lives within the circle of finite things and beyond this circle stands the immense and inscrutable region of the Eternal. When man craves to stand face to face with this Reality—



when he begins to make his spiritual pilgrimage towards the great Goal, there is birth of religion in him.

So religion begins with the spirit of enquiry into the nature of things pertaining to the ultimate questions about matter and soul. Sometimes a sudden vision or an inspiration or an intense longing makes man plunge headlong into an endeavour for spiritual illumination. Sometimes the soul in quest of God is rewarded by fleeting glimpses of unearthly visions. To men of profound sensitivity or simple yet abiding intensity religion is often congenital. But in all cases the profound unrest gives rise to the religious enquiry; for the transcendental urge presides over the birth of religion. Swamiji says—"Religion begins with a tremendous dissatisfaction with the present state of things, with our lives".<sup>3</sup> But what is the cause of this discontent or urge for religious enlightenment?

Man is compelled to witness the eternal flux of things around him; constantly the ephemeral character of all phenomena is impressed upon him. A savage has also felt this evanescent role of the world in which he is incarcerated. Nothing is permanent in this spatio-temporal universe; everything is marching steadily towards sure annihilation and death is the inexorable consummation of birth. Man reacts to this universal pattern of changing, decaying and dying things by searching after the changeless Something—by resisting transitoriness with the vision of and belief in a realm of stable things and values. Swamiji says that in the most ancient language the event of death is expressed by some sort of going. The fact of death rouses in man two feelings—the feeling of immortality and the feeling of enquiry into things that lie beyond death. The first

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3. Works, Vol. 2, p. 123.



feeling is an article of faith or conviction; the second feeling is the beginning of attempt for the justification of the former. Swamiji says—"This is the beginning of religion.....Everything is gone, is going, and will go..... where do they go?"<sup>4</sup> This question is the everlasting foundation of religion; this urge is inherent in man and it finds expression in religion. In other words, religion is inseparable from man. Swamiji points out that religion has never been imposed on man; it has sprung from the need of his inner being. It is the immanent and transcendent heritage of all humanity.

Religion which symbolises an urge for the unknown something naturally involves an element of the supersensuous or numinous. That is, religion contains non-rational elements that are above the scope of the ordinary sense-faculties. Religious truths do not belong to the realm of empirical experience alone. We cannot know them just as we know a table or a chair. That is why the truths of religious matters such as spiritual experiences, communion with the divine and such other things seem to baffle the common process of logic and reason. Logic and reason impose on man invariably sad limitations that condition sense-faculties; they represent a very narrow realm of knowledge. In this perspective religion is thought to have an element of non-rationality. This does not mean that religion is illogical or unreasonable; it means that it is not exhausted fully in the domain of intellectual apprehension. It has certain aspect that is beyond reason and logic. Intellect can grasp the philosophical or metaphysical aspect of religion but so far as spiritual experience or realisation which is the essence of religion, is concerned it has limited

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4. Works, Vol. 8, p. 148.



scope, and efficacy. Here non-rationality does not mean irrationality.

Moreover, Swamiji points out that intellectual affirmation or denial of the existence of religion or God has nothing to do with religion or religious truths. All intellectual efforts end in apprehension; religion is not apprehension of values or truths but their realisation. So he says—"Intellectual assent and intellectual dissent are not religion".<sup>5</sup> Religion does not end in knowing but in complete transformation of the aspirant who is truly religious. Religion is dynamic aspiration, the process of being and becoming, it marks the actual transformation of man into God. Speaking about the essence of religion he observes—"It is being and becoming.....it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes<sup>6</sup>.....Religion is realisation".<sup>7</sup> So in being God and in factual realisation of religious truths and values and in becoming transformed into what one believes lies the essence of religion. Therefore, religion is neither charity, nor belief in doctrine or dogma, nor a precept, nor a philosophical attitude. It is neither hearing lecture on religion, nor reading books and scriptures on religion, nor reasoning, nor intellectual comprehension of God. It is neither the acknowledgement of a fact, nor a product of a brain; it is neither going to the church or temple, nor putting a special dress or a few marks on body, nor rituals and rites.

Religion is the dynamic process of spiritual life and it makes for transformation and attainment of God. It makes us attain the unchanging One amid the show of multiform manifestations. It is vivid, unifying and edi-

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5. Works, Vol. 1, p. 232.

6. Works, Vol. 2, p. 294.

7. Works, Vol. 1, p. 232.



fiying spiritual experience which brings about a complete change and a new saintly life which is a boon to humanity.. Hence religion is always practical and is concerned with action and attainment, realisation and experience, fulfilment and unique illumination of entire being. The religion is concerned with daily act and thought of man. The true fulfilment of it lies in the ability to see it and to feel its inspiration constantly and to realise it in a thousand times more intense a sense than that in which we sense the world of things. And the perfection of religious experience is attained when the aspirant stands on the threshold of illumination, when he no longer cogitates about the spiritual values but becomes the dynamic partaker of the divine within and without. Then the mystic realm of the supra-consciousness is open unto him. But so long as the door to the intuitive life is shut to him religion to man is a mere talk or ground for preparation. Swamiji points out that experience is the sole teacher here and every one in order to realise the truths must experience them anew in the light of his intensity of endeavour and spiritual capacity. In religion experience alone marks the advancement of a spiritual pilgrim.

The veracity of religious experience must be verified by individual experiences in all cases of individual attempt. Swamiji observes—"Verification is the only proof of religious experience".<sup>8</sup> The principles of religion and truths of experience are already there; the scope of application of religion forever exists; the truths are not newly discovered, for they are as old as the hills. They were long ago experienced and re-experienced many a time by the aspirants of different times and places. Swamiji shows that now

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8. Works, Vol. 7, p. 7.



it is up to us to work out the plan and scope of religion and to realise the religious truths in our life. We should translate the essentials of religion into daily act and conduct by realising the truths of it. True significance of religion and its strength lie in applying the teachings of it to the spheres of our life for the spiritual well-being of ours. Religion is primarily subjective in the sense that it springs from within in response to Something Divine within and without. It has naturally its being in the innermost recess of our hidden self. So it is bound to be spiritual and always tinged with a pervading spirit of subjectivity.

### III

According to Swami Vivekananda, every major religion has three parts namely, philosophical, mythological and ritual. Philosophy, in the final analysis, is the conceptual basis of religion. Religion is bound to have views on God, man and the world. So religion and philosophy are closely related and Swamiji advocates the need of fruitful co-operation of both. For religion without the support of a sound philosophy naturally degenerates into superstition and distortion; philosophy without the sustaining factors of religious faith and experience becomes fossilised science of values or theoretical system of knowledge.

Mythology and ritual fulfil a great need because most of the people cannot comprehend abstract spiritual contents of religion. Man develops spiritually through successive stages of growth. Mythology and ritual greatly help man in the early stages of the formation of religious consciousness. They are concrete, popular and easily intelligible; they purify emotions and satisfy the natural inclinations of human beings. Mythology explains and illustrates the philosophy of religion by means of legendary stories and



fables of great persons, events and scenes. Ritual gives philosophy more concrete shape so that the common people may grasp the essentials of religion through the practices of ritual.

They stand as symbols of religious truths. Swamiji says—"From time immemorial symbols have been used by all kinds of religion. In one sense we cannot think but in symbols; words themselves are symbols of thought".<sup>9</sup> The symbols of religion are the results of natural development. Yet in the ultimate sense rituals are externals of religion, which are necessary for the beginners only. When realisation comes they fall away to reveal the spiritual reality beyond them. Through the ages man has been trying to comprehend the abstract through the thought-forms and symbols. The realisation of highly abstract truths as they intrinsically are marks a rare culmination of spiritual growth. Rituals include bells, music, books, images, physical and ceremonial factors which are concerned with religious observances. Man in his attempt to fathom the depth of religion catches hold of anything that appeals to senses and helps the process of crystallisation of abstract ideas. Swamiji thinks that ritual will remain as long as the common man remains as he is—as long as people instinctively hold on to something which is popular, concrete and edifying. That is why all efforts to destroy ritualism of religion have always failed. So Swamiji observes—"Therefore, do not decry these rituals and mythologies. Let people have them; let those who desire have them".<sup>10</sup>

The discipline, physical and mental training are sometimes necessary for the religious novices. Their natural

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9. Works, Vol. 1, p. 70.

10. Works, Vol. 2, p. 39.



emotions and sensibilities are satisfied by those inspiring and beautiful forms of rituals. But rituals should always be subservient to and under the guidance and control of cardinal principles of religion. Thus mythology, ritual and philosophy are necessary for every religion for the gradual spiritual development and emotional satisfaction of all its members. All great, living religions should have a profound philosophy, inspiring mythology and ennobling ritual. A religion may give emphasis on philosophy, another on mythology, a third on ritual. The varying degrees of emphasis are determined by various factors, social, spiritual, emotional, material. And no serious harm results if a proper balance is maintained among the three parts of religion.

#### IV

Religion is concerned with both the finite world of human beings and allied things and the infinite Reality of the supreme Godhead. Religion which exclusively deals with only one of the two realms is defective and ineffective. True religion takes into account the transcendental infinity or impersonal Reality and is also the vehicle of finite human emotions and acts pertaining to religious factors of the world and the senses. For the aim of religion is to establish harmony between the divine within and the divine without. It is the connecting link between man and God; Swamiji observes that finite or empirical part of religion which includes religious acts and ceremonies, familiar emotions and allied things is familiar to man. The abstract part is difficult for average man to grasp or understand.

Infinite freedom is the ultimate goal of religion; it suggests various ways to that final propitious end. But what is freedom? The real freedom is the freedom from internal nature—freedom from lust and desire, ignorance



and bondage, birth and death. The consummation of human life is the attainment of perfection that is inherent in every being. In the language of Swamiji "the essence of life is going towards perfection". Man has been always searching after an ideal of perfection. The secular urge for physical, mental, economic, social, intellectual perfection signifies man's material advancement. And the inner urge of religious or spiritual perfection is symbolical of the presence of religion in man. Religious life attains fulfilment in spiritual perfection which is nothing but eternal freedom. Swamiji says—"The idea of all religions, all sects, is the same,—the attaining of liberty".<sup>11</sup> Perfection and freedom are possible when the latent unity between God and man is made manifest—when the harmony of self with the Order is realised. And when every person, Swamiji observes, is transformed into a prophet of vision and foresight, freedom and enlightenment religion will cease to function. Because then its highest aim and hope will be fulfilled; the attainment of unity marks the end and consummation of religion of all times.

There are mainly two types of religion—religion with scripture and religion without scripture. Religion with scripture is very powerful and enduring. It has the great ability to survive in spite of various and prolonged attacks on it by hostile forces. The people belonging to it also survive and preserve their cultural, racial, intellectual and religious integrity and stability against the persistent incursions—political, economic and religious. But religion without scripture does not and cannot endure long and is annihilated by various disintegrating forces. For instance, the religion of the Jews based on Talmud has survived; while the

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11. Works, Vol. 4, p. 49.



scriptureless religion of the Greeks has perished in course of time.

The essential criterion of religion is liberty. It should allow liberty to all (but not license) because in liberty lies the permanent foundation of all religion. Swamiji points out that religion may flourish rapidly at first by the brute force and sheer fanaticism and bigotry. But in the long run religion propagated by force and intolerance is bound to decline; it cannot uplift the peoples. On the other hand, religion that gives liberty of thought to all its adherents and other people may flourish slowly at first but its foundation is deep-rooted on the bed-rock of eternity. He says—".....the preaching of that religion is firm-based on solid ground, which gives everyone liberty to his opinion, and thus uplifts him to a higher path, though the process is slow".<sup>12</sup>

True religion does not interfere indiscriminately in all social affairs. It is not the duty of religion to formulate pleasing social laws or insist on the difference between man and man. In other words, religion is greater than social matters; hence it cannot equate itself with society or social elements or identify itself with the aims and works of society only. Society often permits distinction between man and man in social sphere. The aim of religion is to obliterate any such false distinction in spiritual sphere. Social laws are evolved by economic and other secular conditions arising out of various changeable situations. So the laws of any given society are changeable and subjective to non-religious factors and forces. Under these conditions religion can, at the best, sanction and tolerate salutary laws of society but it can never be merely a social reformer. Religion should

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12. Works, Vol. 5, p. 195.



confine itself as far as possible to the domain of spirituality. Through the transformation of man it should aim at the transformation of society. The above position does not mean that religion should be a passive spectator of social ills and injustice. Religion will point the way; oppose when necessary unjust social rules and customs and be a light to society and its members. But religion must not function merely as a social machine or interfere indiscriminately in all social affairs or degenerate into an instrument of society only.

## V

Swami Vivekananda thinks that science and religion are closely related and both happily should co-exist for the harmonious well-being of humanity. Both of them attempt to help mankind out of bondage; the difference between them is that religion is more holy because it makes morality a vital issue of life, while science does not do so. Religion too has scientific basis. For there must be a scientific basis of universal belief in religion that stands as the eternal background of all religions. This universal belief is undoubtedly grounded on one universal experience which is the source of all sciences. Experience is the hall-mark of religion as well as of science. Swamiji says—"Thus it is clear that all religions of the world have been built upon that one universal and adamant foundation of all our knowledge—direct experience".<sup>13</sup>

The great prophets of religions have directly experienced religious truths and values which are facts of supreme depth and mystic certainty. Their fundamental teachings which form the basis of religions are essentially

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13. Works, Vol. 1, p. 26.



based on scientific validity of direct experience. Their methods and approach, language and terminology may be different from that of science but there cannot be any doubt that there their teachings and findings are grounded on direct experience. Such religious experiences may be rare in modern times but they are neither impossible nor improbable; these experiences are definitely vouchsafed to those who are ready to fulfil a few difficult conditions of body and mind. Moreover, the present rarity of occurrence of such religious experience cannot invalidate the unquestionable veracity of such religious experiences. Swamiji points out that if they were once possible—they are liable to be repeated again and again; uniformity is the law of nature and what once happened can always happen.

Religion deals with the truths of the spiritual world just as the natural sciences deal with the truths of physical world. The book one reads to study the latter is the book of nature; the book one reads to study the former is the book of one's own heart and soul. Science of religion has its own methods just as a particular branch of science has its own methods and technics. He observes—"This science of religion is based on the analysis of the human soul. It has no creed".<sup>14</sup> He thinks that the knowledge of secular sciences covers only a part of the world of truth and knowledge but the religious knowledge is eternal and infinite for it preaches the stable and universal values.

The conflict between science and religion begins when the former uses reason which is mainly applicable to intellectual things to destroy the value and reality of spiritual things and the latter looks down upon all secular knowledge

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14. Works, Vol. 6, p. 48.



and contributions of the former. This conflict in the sphere of intellect and empirical matters frequently ends in the defeat of religion because religion often clings to extraneous matters and tends to defend popular but non-fundamental factors which truly belong to the fields of others. The conflict can end if science ceases to secularise or intellectualise the spiritual contents of religion and religion accepts the need of science unhesitatingly and ceases to give importance to and defend untenable, non-essentials of religion. Religion can stand the test of scientific scrutiny if it stands on its essentials though the scope and validity of scientific enquiry into the religious phenomena must be of limited nature. Yet Swamiji is in favour of allowing rationalistic investigation so far as religion and religious principles are concerned. This will destroy the by-products of religion and make it thousand times more powerful and effective.

Religion and science should co-exist to enhance the exhaustive and complete knowledge. There are two worlds of knowledge—internal and external. The internal truths are gathered through psychology, metaphysics and religion; the external truths are collected through physical and secular sciences. Hence both religion and science are necessary for the growth of harmonious, accurate and perfect knowledge of both the worlds of matter and soul. Religion and science should respect each other, recognise their respective need and limitation and co-operate as far as possible.

## VI.

Swamiji maintains that religion begins where philosophy ends; is the fulfilment of philosophy and its realisation. The appeal and necessity of religion are universal and everlasting. The primitive man was religious.



and modern man is religious and man will be ever religious; for it fulfils a profound need of human nature. It is a fact of history of mankind.

Religion is necessary because human being confronts the unsolved problem of death and pathetic evanescence of human existence. The problem of death is a personal as well as a universal problem; every one has to face it in his or her life and every one has to accept it and meet its inevitable challenge in the light of inner development and preparation. Religion is necessary to man who is on this earth for a brief sojourn, who is tortured by weariness and pain, by failure and disappointment, by bereavement and separation. Religion is necessary because it sheds sunshine on man, lightens his sorrow by the balm of sympathy and instils faith in hours of profound despair. Again, the emotions and hopes, fear and desire, the longing for perfection and immortality and the urge to go beyond the temporal process and confining materialism are inevitable ingredients of human life. They form the perpetual source of the necessity of religion for man. The belief is also man's abiding heritage; man must conform to and believe in something. He invariably tries to conform his life to the pattern of his essential beliefs and convictions. Swamiji says—"Wherever man is, he must develop belief, one must develop a religious nature".<sup>15</sup>

Man is spiritual by nature and the spirituality in man craves for religion. Nobody can fathom the cause of this strange yet highly real evolution of spiritualism in man. It is a fact that man by nature is a religious being with a tendency to have communion or connection with something spiritual or divine or powerful. We have already seen that

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15. Works, Vol. 1, p. 316.



religion is rooted is the old question: is the world real? The question ends with the various answers. But so long as man is vexed and assailed by it religion cannot perish from the world. The question is not a theoretical one; it is a vital thing which greatly influences the whole life of humanity.

A student of the religion knows that all major, living religions are one in essentials. Religions the world over have an abiding similarity; all religions thus reflect an underlying, fundamental unity of truth and thought. People of different times and climes have been seen to react to religious issues and objects in almost similar ways and means. The rituals of religions everywhere are strikingly similar. These facts go to show and prove that humanity everywhere has common religious goal and aspiration, necessity and longing. So there is no denying the basic fact that religion is an elemental necessity of human life the world over in all times. Religion is necessary because it is life's most potent force. Of all the forces that are sedulously operating to mould the human destiny most powerful is the force of religion. It has always been a co-hesive force—a force that binds man with man and makes mankind transcend the bonds of race, climate and culture. Peoples belonging to a particular religion have united into a well-knit brotherhood and stood the test of severe trials and tribulations. In many cases bond of religion proves stronger than any other bond resulting from other factors and considerations. Religion as a subject of study has immense benevolent potentialities. When man studies about the pursuit after the Infinite, about the struggle to go beyond the limitations of senses, about the process which tends to evolve the spiritual man, his nature spontaneously begins to improve and develop spiritually. The very struggle of the aspirant to realise God spiritually



uplifts him and the man who studies about it is also greatly elevated by such inspiring example. It widens knowledge, strengthens his morality and universalises the personality.

Swami Vivekananda justifies the necessity of religion on utilitarian grounds. He maintains that mere non-religious standards cannot explain or justify the ethical relation between man and man. Ethical or moral laws cannot be derived from the considerations of material utility. He says—"Without the supernatural sanction....or the perception of the super-conscious, as I prefer to term it, there can be no ethics".<sup>16</sup> Material utility is confined to the domain of secular world and without the aspiration for the transcendent spirituality there can neither be an everlasting ideal nor a stable ethical standard. So the utilitarian standard that attempts to bind man down to the bonds of human society is unable to account for the ethical laws. Again, ethics in itself is not the end but the means to an end; the basis of utility is too narrow. Utility preaches that happiness is the goal of man; if it is so then why should not one make oneself happy and others unhappy: Utilitarian philosophy cannot properly answer this question. The utilitarian standards have no stable background or basis. They work under temporary social and economic conditions which constantly fluctuate and change. The ethical laws in order to be of abiding force and value must owe loyalty to a permanent and transcendent Ideal or Order or standard. So moral and ethical laws must be grounded on religion which is rooted in the infinite Reality, in order to guide and elevate mankind in all times.

Moreover, what is the highest utility of man's life? Surely it consists in the attainment of the extreme and

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16. Works, Vol. 2, p. 63.



everlasting happiness of mankind. And we all know that permanent happiness can never be found in material achievements or enjoyment of the senses. Swamiji concludes thus—"Happiness is only found in the spirit. Therefore, the highest utility for mankind is to find this happiness in the spirit".<sup>17</sup> But Swamiji in this connection sounds a note of warning. He warns us not to judge the value and efficacy of true religion purely by the volume of material utility it may usher in. Money or wealth or physical well-being cannot be the measure of religious excellence or standard. Often abstract scientific findings, subtle mathematical discovery, self-sacrifice, virtue, morality, religious illumination do not bring about any material utility or benefit. We should not judge the value of higher things by a low standard or measure. To a truly religious man "God and the love of God form the highest and the only utility of human existence".<sup>18</sup> Creature-comforts alone cannot be the highest happiness of man who is essentially divine.

Religion is necessary for man because it alone helps man conquer his internal nature. It is grand to conquer external nature but it is definitely grander to conquer passions and desires, selfishness and greed. On the conquest of inner man rests ultimately the benefit arising out of the victory over external nature. Man must be the master of himself before he can tap the unlimited resources of the material achievements for the permanent good of humanity. In fact on the spiritual victory of man rests—"the main-springs of the strength of every race.....and the death of that race begins the day that spirituality wanes and materialism gains ground".<sup>19</sup>

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17. Works, Vol. 2, p. 83.

18. Works, Vol. 3, p. 43.

19. Works, Vol. 3, p. 65.



## VII

The religious life has two stages—preparatory and final. The preparatory stage consists in believing in dogmas and in hearing lectures on religion, in reading scriptures and in observing rituals and spiritual exercises. The final stage presides over the birth of enlightenment. Swamiji says—"Realisation is real religion, all the rest is only preparation.....Reason, theories, documents, doctrines, books, religious ceremonies are helps to religion".<sup>20</sup>

The first condition of religious life is reverence. The aspirant must approach religion with deep and abiding veneration. It gives depth to aspiration, sincerity to conviction, inflexibility to determination. For mere light-hearted curiosity or brief intellectual inclination or short-lived emotion cannot help man here. One must have earnestness, steadfast determination and profound faith in ultimate realisation of religious values and goal.

The second condition is the tremendous dissatisfaction with the world and senses as they are. A man satisfied with the limitations of private and personal and social worldly life of joy and gain can never be religious in the true sense of the term. The divine discontent is the starting point of spiritual life everywhere.

The third condition is the urge to go beyond the sad limitations of ordinary existence. Mere discontent is not enough; so one must have also the urge to go beyond the realm of discontentment. The discontent must force man to go at the root of things—to endeavour for the vision of the heart of Reality—to realise what is infinite and transcendent Truth. This urge finds expression in the search and enquiry after the divine goal, in the desire for spiritual

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20. Works, Vol. 4, p. 31.



perfection. The urge for perfection involves the concept of an Ideal which is above all change and is transcendental in character. The Ideal is visualised against the background of imperfection of finite things including the imperfection of the aspirant's personality and life. The Ideal symbolises the perfection and true knowledge, or Infinite Being or God. Similarly, finitude involves infinity, imperfection involves the possibility of perfection, bondage involves the possibility of liberation. The religious man begins his struggle to attain the Ideal first visualised within the domain of finite world. But as he spiritually develops he realises that the Ideal is infinite and transcendental; consequently he feels that it is unattainable by senses alone or by intellectual assertion arising out of ego-centric personality. He thus gives up the ego-inspired attempt to gain the infinite Ideal. The realisation that the Ideal is eternal comes later on and with it his true religious life comes into being. According to Swami Vivekananda this giving up of attempt to grasp the Ideal by ego-centric action and impulse is the bedrock of religious life.

This ushers in the fourth condition of religious life, which is renunciation. This signifies the process of sacrifice because the cessation of self-centred endeavour is the beginning of the universalisation of the individual ego. The religious man realises the vanity of selfishness, the utter futility of narrow egoism. Annihilation of egoism which is the seat of attachment and desire, infatuation and impurity, ignorance and base propensities, makes the aspirant free from the bondage of flesh and lust. It makes easy and smooth the path of self-sacrifice which is a major factor in religious life. Swamiji says—"Religion is self-abnegation .....Religion comes with intense self-sacrifice."<sup>21</sup> .....This

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21. Works, Vol. 6, p. 49.



is Vairagya or renunciation, and the beginning of religion .....The Alpha and Omega is renunciation.<sup>22</sup>

The fifth condition of religious life is love for all mankind. When I renounce my petty individuality I do not belong to a narrow realm of particular family or society or race or nation. The end of individuality is the practical realisation of universality. Then I belong to entire universe and mankind; then I realise my unity not only with human beings but also with the rest of creation including animals and all other things, sentient and insentient. Thus I rise above the level of all types of limitation. So in religion not 'I' but 'Thou' is the aim of man and religion guides man to this goal through universal love. This also marks the stage of man's ascent to the higher state of spirituality from the sphere of material existence. Truly religious man seeks the broader display of Infinity through the supersensuous Self within. He stands now on the threshold of religious life and revelation of supreme value. In religious life man tends to universalise himself so that he may comprehend the infinity and unity of all beings and goals and things.

The sixth condition of religious life is service to all through words, deeds and thought. Swamiji deprecates merely subjective development of religious life. The religious life must be a dynamic and not static existence. He holds that he who is freed from the bondage of ignorance and captivity of every type can serve humanity better than those who are still in bonds of selfishness and egoism. Man of religion alone is capable of doing infinite good to others because he is the master of himself and the limitless divine energy. He does not run away from the world but is always

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22. Works, Vol. 3, p. 343.



in the thick of the battles for the upliftment and well-being of others. The service purifies the heart, broadens the vision, and increases love for all. This makes man feel the oneness of human life and his unity with the whole of the universe. And when a man does for others, he has his being in God. Swamiji says..”.....love and charity for the whole human race, that is the test of true religiousness.”<sup>23</sup>

The last and seventh condition of religious life is utmost purity and exercise of high morality. Purity and excellence of body and mind are absolutely essential in this spiritual life. All religions are based on morality and personal purity. Swamiji declares—“The sinequa non of acquiring spiritual truth for one’s self, or for imparting it to others, is the purity of heart and soul”.<sup>24</sup> Truly religious soul is calm and the master of his internal and external nature; his life is fully and permanently transfigured. The end of such life is unitive life or God-realisation or Self-realisation or supreme knowledge of God. It culminates in liberation or in the establishment of inherent identity between the aspirant and God.

### VIII

Swami Vivekananda declares that in essentials all religions are one. Different religions are paths to and the manifestations of one eternal Truth. A true Hindu is also a true Christian and vice versa. He points out that the strength of religion rests on the united strength of all religions. So if one religion calls another religion false the condemnation is bound to act upon the accuser like a boomarang. Again, if one religion is false, then all religious are fallacious too. Therefore, the bickering between religion

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23. Works, Vol. 1, p. 323.

24. Works, Vol. 3, p. 50.



and religion weakens the very foundation of religion as a whole.

Swamiji justifies the existence of many religions because "all the different religions are but applications of the one religion, adapted to suit the requirement of different religions". The aim of religions is to realise God; religion is one but its applications are numerous. So he observes—"No one form of religion will do for all. Each is a pearl on a string".<sup>25</sup> In other words, all true proven religions can fruitfully co-exist; their outward forms may change and vary according to changing needs and circumstances but their essence remains the same constantly like the substratum of energy in the midst of its various forms.

The fighting among religions break out because people do not go into the heart and essence of their respective religions to realise the oneness of religions. The conflict always begins when people simply adhere in the name of religion to the local customs and usages, superstitions and acts which are often at variance with the custom and usages, superstitions and acts of people belonging to other religions and lands. Customs, habits, ceremonies, local usages and observances are not religion; they pass in the name of religion. This is the main cause of the conflict. People should go not to the forms of religions but to the principles or essence of religions of theirs and thus realise the basic harmony of religions. Then conflict will cease forever. Swamiji thinks that temples and churches, books and concrete forms of religion are simply the kindergarten of religion and fighting among religions will continue so long as the people do not go beyond or above this kindergarten-stage.

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25. Works, Vol. 6, p. 48.



The second cause of conflict is extreme fanaticism arising out of chauvinism. We must concentrate on fundamentals and uphold the religious doctrine of the oneness of humanity. The concepts of one moral order, oneness of humanity, one universal God, immortality of soul are found in all highly developed religions. Mythology and ritual should not be allowed to usurp the authority of cardinal principles of religion. Against the back-ground of conflict among religions Swami Vivekananda envisions the emergence of universal religion in modern times. The universal religion will liberate religions from the trammels of conflict and limitation and would once again put them on the sure and unwavering foundations.

The universal religion for every person of every religion is possible. Swamiji declares that universal religion has no location in space and time; its universal sun shines on all—on the Hindus and the Christians, on the Buddhists and the Muslims, on the sinners and the saints, on the poor and the rich. Its infinite bosom enfolds all humanity irrespective of caste and creed, race and culture in one universal and everlasting embrace of love and benediction. It would not persecute any one or be intolerant; it will recognise the basic divinity of every man and woman and the whole world of creation; its sole aim will be to help humanity realise its own true, divine nature.

Yet the universal religion will not emerge from the dying embers of perished religions. It exists eternally in the heart of every religion and its realisation is possible when each person belonging to each religion will assimilate the spirit of all religions. When every person without being disloyal to his or her religion and by developing according to the laws of his or her religion becomes fully aware of



the unity of all religions—the universal religion is born in his or her soul and heart. “In other words, the universal religion will reveal the unity of all religions without destroying their unique diversity and essential identity. Swamiji observes that the universal religion had existed, is existing and will exist in all times to come. It for ever lives in the universal feeling of brotherhood, in spiritual affinity of all races, in the eternal divinity of every soul.

The watch-word of universal religion is the spontaneous acceptance of what is good in every religion. Swamiji says that the attitude of a man believing in universal religion will be as follows—“I accept all that were in the past, and worship them all; I worship God with every one of them; in whatever form they worship Him. I shall go to the mosque of the Mohammadan; I shall enter the Christian’s church and kneel before the crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhistic temple, where I shall take refuge in Buddha and in his law. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu”.<sup>26</sup>

Time has come for all living religions to adapt themselves to the present needs and inclinations of modern man so that they can guide humanity along the right path towards the right goal: God-realisation. Religion must be studied on a universal basis and all narrow, limited and conflicting ideas must be eliminated. As the human mind broadens its religious temper broadens too. The future forms of religion should be universal and wide open to new assimilations. In this modern age religion must be dynamic—a living, plastic force which is capable of infinite adjustments. It must be inclusive and accommodating. The universalisation of religion will immensely enhance its

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26. Works, Vol. 2, p. 372.



power and scope of application for the well-being of mankind. Religion must illumine the soul of every person and be based on comprehensive unity and catholicity. Thus it will penetrate into the hearts of all and elevate, purify and finally deify mankind.



## CHAPTER V

### LEO TOLSTOY ON RELIGION



*Religion, Philosophy And Science—Religion  
And Morality—Religion And Reason—Reli-  
gion—Its Essence—Religion And Faith—  
Man's Aim Of Life.*

"The belief that what must be renounced is bad, though sometimes false, is far less often false than untamed passion supposes; and the creed of religion, by providing a reason for proving that it is never false, has been the means of purifying our hopes by the discovery of many austere truths."

—Bertrand Russell—

#### I

Leo Tolstoy holds that science and philosophy cannot replace religion and it is erroneous to say that to define man's relation to the reality the help of science and philosophy should be taken instead of the help of religion. He maintains that the so-called belief that the philosophy and science can replace religion is the main cause of the present crisis of confusion. Religion had existed before the birth of science and philosophy. It has been defining man's relation to the reality since the dawn of primitive era. Moreover, Tolstoy observes that the mental effort of man is pre-determined by religion and religious training. Every man's mental activity has certain predilection or inclination.



Religion sets the direction that always shows the direction for all mental works. It decisively influences the predilection of our mental and intellectual activities and stands at the centre of our creative faculties. According to him, philosophy and science have always followed the lead of religion.

Philosophy has always been and will always be the investigation of the consequences that spring from the relation religion establishes between man and the infinite universe<sup>1</sup> including God. Similarly, science carries on experiment and observation in the realm of natural phenomena and objects and this has been possible because religion has established a relation between the scientific persons and the universe. Again, it is religion that selects certain things and objects out of innumerable forms of nature for science and philosophy for their works and enquiries. It has always been so. Tolstoy writes—"Each religion selects a range of objects for investigation and therefore the science of each different time and people inevitably bears the character of the religion from whose point of view it sees its objects".<sup>2</sup>

Neither philosophy nor science can establish man's relation to the infinite universe because the said relation should be established before science or philosophy begins to function. Both of them attempt to explore the phenomena intellectually but relation man establishes to the universe or reality is more than intellectual evaluation; it has also the elements of feeling, experience and the spiritual force of his inner being. Mere mechanical or logical explanation of creation around him cannot be satisfactory to a man who feels and suffers, rejoices and fears, hopes and aspires. Therefore, it is religion which shows him his place in and

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1. Tolstoy uses the following terms synonymously: 'infinite universe', 'God', 'reality', 'world'.
  2. The Works Of Leo Tolstoy, Vol. 1, Essays & Letters, p. 138.



relation to the universe or reality. It reveals to him the deep meaning of human life against the background of divine will and purpose. Again, to study and understand intricate points and contents of philosophy and science intense preparation and education are necessary but religious comprehension does not involve a life-long preparation or study. It is given to all—wise or ignorant, rich or poor. The man who is ready to renounce the cares of the world—to have the awareness of his insignificance in the presence of the eternal and infinite and to have abiding sincerity, can possess religion or have religious experience.

But what is the essence of this non-philosophical and non-scientific religious knowledge? Tolstoy answers that the religious knowledge is beyond any process of exact definition because it proceeds from a knowledge that precedes all other knowledges and on it all other knowledges rest. We have no means at our disposal to define the content of this knowledge. That is why in theology this knowledge has been correctly identified with divine revelation. This knowledge cannot be gained by study or intellectual endeavour. It can only be gained by the spontaneous acceptance of the manifestation of infinite wisdom that is gradually revealing itself to mankind. And the faculties that make such acceptance of wisdom successful are not active intellectual qualities of the mind but the passive conditions of the receptive heart. The pre-conditions of the religious consciousness are renunciation of worldly cares, the awareness of humility and firm sincerity of conviction. Unfortunately the scientists to-day have a very confused conception of the essence of religion, morality and the life as a whole. Hence their success in the fields of science has not been very helpful in promoting real peace and well-being among mankind. Tolstoy sums up his opinion on



religion thus—"Religion is a relation man sets up between himself and the endless and infinite universe, or its sources and first cause".<sup>3</sup>

## II

Tolstoy maintains that mainly three different interpretations are given to the word 'religion'. They are as follows:

1. The first view holds that religion is special and real revelation by God for man and it consists in worshipping God according to that revelation. This meaning is given to religion by peoples belonging to different historical religions. The people of a particular religion think that their religion is only true.

2. The second view is of opinion that religion is a collection of certain superstitions and beliefs and it is a superstitious form of worship according to these superstitious beliefs. This interpretation comes from most of the unbelievers.

3. The third view is that religion is a collection of laws and propositions devised by wise men. They are needed to console the common people, to restrain their urges and make them manageable. This interpretation is given by those who do not believe in religion but recognise its usefulness as an instrument of state.

The first view visualise religion as sure and certain truth which is absolutely necessary for human welfare. The second view envisions religion as completely unnecessary and wants to free man from its bondage by all possible means. The third view recognises the usefulness of religion so far as the common mass of people are concerned though maintains that it is not necessary for men of high culture.

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3. Ibid, p. 142.



Tolstoy holds that the incompleteness and diversity of these definitions spring from the fact that they fail to grasp the essential characteristics of religion. They define some of its aspects from the view-points of different people. In all these definitions we do not find the definition of the essence of religion but merely the views and beliefs of some persons on religion.

To-day the so-called cultured people do not believe in religion and they think it to be the result of superstitious fear of unexplained natural phenomena. They believe blindly that the humanity has already passed through the stages of religion and metaphysics, and has now entered the age of reason and science. They think that the religious phenomena of to-day are merely the relics of the past and they are no longer necessary in modern times. But they forget that religion does not necessarily spring from superstitious fear. Great men like Socrates Descartes, Newton and others who had no fear of any kind had been deeply religious persons. Moreover, the assertion that religion has originated from man's superstitious fear of the mysterious natural forces cannot afford to answer the following vital question: what is it in man that endows him with the conception of the unseen, supernatural beings? The fear-theory cannot supply answer to this question. Man may fear the flash of lightning or the roar of thunder; but why does he think of some invisible, supernatural Being like Jupitar? Man is terribly afraid of death; but why does he invent the soul of the dead? This shows that fear alone is not the necessary cause of those conceptions and religious convictions of man. The fear of death cannot force man to think of or invent the immortality of soul. We must, therefore, accept the inherent religiousness of human nature.

Tolstoy holds that reasons of these factors evidently



spring from the essence of the thing we call religion. Every man is now and then conscious of his own insignificance, extreme loneliness and guilt. He is aware of his finiteness amid an infinite universe and he is fully conscious of his limitations and imperfections. These feelings have always existed and would continue to exist so long as man remains on earth. Every sensible man is perplexed and amazed by the panorama of creation; he cannot but witness around him by his rational consciousness the operation of an eternal law—the infallible conformity of phenomenal existence. He becomes aware that as an isolated being he is sentenced to die—to disappear into the limbo of space and time. He suffers the torments of conscience, the burden of his own moral responsibility pertaining to his actions. He inevitably pauses to ask himself—"What is the meaning of my momentary, uncertain and unstable existence amid this eternal, firmly defined and unending universe"?<sup>4</sup> No rational man can evade this important question of his life and reply to this question involves the essence of religion.

The entire issue thus boils down to this vital question: why do I exist and what is my relation to the infinite Reality that surrounds me? All the metaphysics, all the doctrines of deities, all the theories of the origin of the world and soul spring from this fundamental enquiry of man. Tolstoy says—"There is no religion, from the most elevated to the coarsest, that has not at its root this establishing of man's relation to the surrounding universe or its first cause".<sup>5</sup> He maintains that there are three fundamental relations in which man stands to the infinite universe and its author namely, (a) the primitive, personal relation, (b) the social or family relation, (c) and the divine relation. In fact there can only

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4. Ibid, p. 132.

5. Ibid, p. 133.



be two essential relations in which man can stand towards reality, the personal and the divine. The former denotes the aspiration of man for individual or personal well-being and the latter denotes the aspiration of man to serve his Maker or God selflessly. The social relation is only an extension of the personal relation.

The personal relation involves the desire of personal well-being and prosperity. A savage sees in the meaning of life the urge for his personal happiness and wealth; he does not care for the good of other peoples. The social relation involves the concept of social welfare. Man now learns to place the social welfare of his community or state above his personal good. He sees in the meaning of life the aspiration for the good of his nation and people. Thus man comes from personal relation to social relation.

The divine relation is based on the concept of universal good of all. Here man sees himself as an inseparable part of entire mankind and sees in the good of all his own good. Now man visualises the reality of which he is a significant part, as the true manifestation of God and believes that the highest virtue consists in trying to serve the will and purpose of God. He believes that the universe is not for his personal selfish joy and desire but it is fulfilling a divine mission and will. This concept of relation between man and the reality is the expression of the highest essence of religion. In the final analysis, religion is the relation man has to reality or God. And man as a rational being is bound to have some relation to reality. In this sense religion is inevitably necessary to man.

From the above definition of religion naturally follows the definition of morality. Tolstoy writes—".....morality is the indication and explanation of such human activity as naturally results from men holding this or that relation



towards the universe".<sup>6</sup> Morality is the practical consequence of the concept of such relation which religion establishes between man and the universe. If religion is the relation between the two, morality is the effect of that relation in man's life and conduct. Morality guides the way of life which results from that relation. Tolstoy believes that from the three types of relation mentioned above flow three types of morality namely, personal, social and divine or universal. Each man's morality is determined by the relation in which he stands to the infinite universe or its source, God. Hence morality is decisively influenced by and springs from different relations religion brings in.

Therefore, morality cannot be free from the domination of religion. In other words, there cannot be any morality independent of religion, for not only it is the product of religion but also it is implied in the very essence of religion. Religion in revealing true meaning of life by establishing man's relation to the reality demands a moral way of life. The moral way of life should follow the explanation of meaning of relation by religion. So morality cannot be separated from religion. Morality is never static but is a dynamic process. It is constantly developing and growing by the process of evolution. Therefore, the attempt to conform it to certain fixed dogmas and rules of certain societies will be the infringement of morality itself. The condition of moral manifestation is freedom.

Yet it would be equally wrong to hold that only social progress produces morality; morality springs from religion. Tolstoy says—"Special forms of social life produce morality only when the results of religious influence—which is morality, are put into them".<sup>7</sup> Morality can only be

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6. Ibid, pp. 142-143.

7. Ibid, p. 153.



effective when it is rooted in religion which man has eternally possessed and which lies deep in man's inner being. So the dictates of secular morality not based on religion are bound to prove futile. For they are cut off from the hidden foundations of human life and existence. Such morality cannot touch or rouse man for it has no link with the vital life-current of humanity. The present confusion in the realm of morality is due to the fact that some leading great men are attempting to teach a morality not founded on true religion. There is no disagreement on the point that true morality must be separated from superstitions. We should try to define morality reasonably, correctly and exactly; but it should not be separated from religion. It should be a sheer folly to evolve higher and logical morality independent of religion; for morality founded on sophistry can neither be sincere nor convince or inspire humanity. Tolstoy writes—"Without religious roots there can be no real, sincere morality, just as without roots there can be no real flowers".<sup>8</sup>

### III

Tolstoy observes that it is the imperative need of every man to have clear and exhaustive understanding of his own religious ideas and convictions. Man rests on certain religious foundations; and in order to attain the true well-being of his life and accomplish the divine mission for which he is here on earth man should exert his utmost to elucidate for himself the contents of his own religion. This attempt and its success will clearly show the purpose of his life and destiny. Some irreligious persons wrongly believe that the religious questions cannot be solved by reason. They think that the application of reason to these questions is

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8. Ibid, p. 154.



the source of error. Yet such supposition, Tolstoy firmly holds, is strange and evidently fallacious. Man has received from God only one faculty by which he can know himself and his relation to the universe or reality or God. And this faculty is reason. But man has been incorrectly informed that while he can use reason to know and understand his home and family, business and politics, scientific and artistic things, he can not use it to solve the religious questions which are vital to his well-being and for which reason has been given unto him by God. This outlook is totally wrong and highly misleading. Man can never live without reason; it is the inherent quality of man. Man's beliefs and faiths, ideas and precepts are guided and determined by reason. If a man believes in one thing and not in another thing—it is because reason tells him to believe in that and not in another thing. Tolstoy says—“To say a man should not be guided by reason, is the same to say to a man carrying a lamp in a dark catacomb, that, to find a way out, he must extinguish his lamp and be guided, not by light, but by something else”.<sup>9</sup>

It may be argued that every man is not gifted with keen intellect and capacity to express his subtle thoughts, so errors may be easily found in the exposition of one's own religious views. Tolstoy says that every man is given a law to follow and the suitable capacity or organ to receive the law. Religion may be hidden to the learned man; it may stand revealed to the reason of a simple person. Reason should not be equated with intellectual keenness or logical aptitude or rational perspicacity. According to Tolstoy, reason is not acquired by long training like the intellectual ability or logical precision. Reason is God-

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9. Ibid, p. 157.



given—it is given to man who is willing and sincere, steady and receptive in nature. The existence of law involves the existence of reason through which the law is assimilated or realised by man. This law is religion and it remains hidden to those who are unwilling to receive it, who are engaged in mundane affairs of life only. If I am willing to follow religion, the reason will definitely, spontaneously come to my help to aid me in discerning the truth of religion. Reason is the natural capacity to know the religious and spiritual truths simply and directly and it is vouch-safed to those who fulfil sincerely certain simple conditions. This is the conclusion of Tolstoy.

The law or religion of life stands revealed and discovered. There is no need to discover it; bygone generations had discovered it long, long ago. It is the duty of man now to test the veracity of traditional truth by his reason and to find by reason the true religion that is hidden in the traditional views. Man must judge the value of tradition by reason and not reason by tradition. Traditions may be false because they are created by human agencies which are subject to errors. But true reason comes from God and so it cannot be false; it can discern truth and differentiate truth from untruth from the confusing medley of traditional views. Tolstoy believes that no special capacity is needed to know the basic truths of religion. Reason when universalised as the divine quality and the instrument for the attainment of truths, can be within the reach of every person. The simple meaning of life seems to be obscure to man because simple man to-day has been confused by various irrationalities. And these irrationalities or artificialities hide the manifestation of true reason which is always present in man in potential form.

The will of God is known to us by reason alone. We



should transmit the truths gained by reason both by deed and word for the good of all. All truths cannot be realised at once but as we develop we tend to assimilate these truths more and more with the help of reason. We should try to express in words the religious truths thus gained for the benefit of others. It is the most holy duty of man.

#### IV

The movement of religious progress follows ups and downs of life just as every civilisation is subject to recurrent rise and fall. When religion deviates from its original aim and purpose it is gradually petrified into inveterate forms and slowly ceases to exert any influence on humanity. Then the educated minority ceases to believe in the standard religion and pretends to pay homage to it in order to keep the mass of people loyal to the established order and institutions of the day. This phenomenon has occurred in various forms of human society but what is happening in modern times in the domain of religion has never happened before. The educated minority is in a destructive mood so far as religion is concerned. They do not merely disbelieve in religion but also are convinced that religion or its pretense is no longer necessary either for themselves or for the common people. This is the extreme attitude of the extremists; we have already seen that there is another group of persons who pay lip-sympathy to religion for its usefulness in keeping the people manageable. But the attitude of the extremists is definitely iconclastic; they feel that now religion should be replaced by science. This attitude presents a grave menace to the existence of religion.

But Tolstoy unhesitatingly maintains that their attempt to wipe out religion from the face of the earth will not be successful. Their assumption, in the final analysis, is based



on an unjustifiable faith in the infallibility of science. Moreover, in spite of their exaggerated claim for science the irrefutable fact remains that no rational man has lived or can live without religion. Tolstoy writes—"A rational man cannot live without a religion, precisely because reason is characteristic of his nature".<sup>10</sup> The difference between man and an animal lies in the fact that the preceptive capacities in animals are within the bonds of instinct, whereas the essential perceptive ability of man is reason. Man is endowed with reason and the instinctive actions cannot satisfy man. He envisions himself as an inseparable part of a family, and gradually he becomes aware of himself as the significant part of the entire reality which is infinite and eternal. He is bound to conceive of a basic relation in which he stands to the reality or God. He is bound to be conscious of himself as a being with great mission and destiny which can only be consummated by religion which connects him with the rest of reality. Religion in this sense is the indispensable condition of human growth.

The reasonable man feels that the infinite reason is symbolical of infinite reality or Beings or God or universe. He feels that he is in living connection with reality or God and reality or God has benevolent influence on his self and life; he realises that he is not foreign to infinite life or reality—that to receive guidance in life he must connect himself with the reality through the saving grace of religion. So Tolstoy says—"True religion is a relation, accordant with reason and knowledge, which man establishes with the infinite life surrounding him, and it is such as binds his life to that infinite, and guide his conduct".<sup>11</sup>

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10. Ibid, p. 291.

11. Ibid, p. 295.



There have been and there are many religions in this world. For the expression of man's relation to the infinite life or reality differs in different times and climes according to the diverse stages of human development among different nations of the world. It is also true that sometimes the existing religion becomes so perverted by political and economic, social and intellectual factors that it actually ceases to exist. But the cessation of it is only a temporary affair and it revives again. Religion is really alive like life; it is born and it develops; it grows old and dies only to resurrect again to become powerful and vibrant with life. Therefore, religion is imperishable. Every religion has witnessed repeated periods of deterioration, lifelessness and regeneration. Its degeneration is only temporary; it has an undying element in it because however crude religion may be it always establishes a relation between man and reality and without that much needed relation man cannot exist.

Every religion possesses the conception of the equality of all mankind in presence of the sublime infinity of God. Religion measures man by the absolute standard of the infinity of God; so naturally and inevitably every religion preaches the doctrine of equality of humanity and this concept is fundamental characteristic of every religion. Religions differ only in external forms but have wonderful agreement on their essentials and basic principles. The essence of religion—its cardinal basis consists of these cardinal doctrines which are common to all religions. Tolstoy maintains that these cardinal doctrines should form the very basis of today's religion. That type of religion is supremely necessary now. He declares—".....this religion of our times, common to all men, exists.....true religion is that of which the basic principles agree with those of all other



religions".<sup>12</sup> The principles of this true religion are neither different nor unintelligible so far as the religion of the common people and the common people are concerned. The principles are neither difficult to understand nor strange or unfamiliar to all. They are so very natural and familiar to humanity that they are accepted as true and real as soon as they are presented to humanity. There is nothing mysterious in the essentials of religion because they are very simple, clear and easily intelligible to common people. Tolstoy sums up these cardinal principles which are to be found in every religion and which should go to form religion of to-day. They are as follows:

1. There is a God Who is the origin of all things.
2. There is in man an element of the divine origin.
3. To increase this divine element or spark man must control his base passions and create in himself the love for all through the moral way of living.
4. The practical means of attaining the divine goal consists in doing to others as you would they should do to you.

Tolstoy holds that the above principles are to be found in every religion, ancient and modern. It is wrong to hold that what is absurd and untelligible is religious or to equate religion with supernatural and irrational forms of ideas and imaginations. The universal religion based on universal and simple principles just outlined fully meets the spiritual needs that a man has in this world from cradle to the grave. The universal religion defines man's relation to the source of all things and the purpose of life that results from this relation. It shows that man is the inseparable part of the divine or God and his highest virtue consists in trying to manifest

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12. Ibid, pp. 327-328.



more or more the divine element which is in every being. It also suggests the means by the help of which man can attain his goal. The simple means is illustrated in the following simple rule: do to others as you wish them to do to you. Tolstoy is convinced that this simple rule can easily possess the authority of holy scriptures or the sanctity of the sacraments.

The truths so simple and clear of true religion can be easily taught to children and adults and all persons by parents and teachers, by rulers and leaders of society. These truths will be readily accepted by all because they are so familiar and inspiring. They should be taught that one God is the eternal spirit and His presence is felt within the heart and we can increase the element of divinity within us by right living and conduct, by doing to others what we wish others to do for us. All meaningless rules and ceremonies, all intricate rites and rituals, all dogmas and superstitions, all myths and stories that go in the name of religion are harmful and mystifying. The principles of the true universal religion can transform the humanity into a peaceful, united and happy world-community. But such utopia does not come into being and such principles are not taught due to following causes.

The people to-day have lived long without religion. In consequence of this type of living they have become accustomed to establish and defend their existence by violent methods. They think that the present existence to be not only natural but also inevitable. The common masses of people under the spell of hypnotism exercised upon them by the interested parties think and feel that through violence alone the well-being can be secured on this earth. The world is now in the grip of a great vicious circle. The absence of religion makes possible the existence of animal



life based on violence, while the animal way of life based on violence makes emancipation from hypnotism and the adoption of true religion almost impossible. So man does not do what is natural and beneficial, easy and simple—does not destroy the by-products of religion and preach the true essence of it.

This enchanting and enslaving circle can only be broken by men of true religion alone. The government leaders and philosophers, priests and clergy belonging to dogmatic religion will not and cannot destroy it. The great masses of unlearned people cannot usher in the era of true religion for evident reasons. They are under the hypnotic spell from generation to generation. Therefore, the liberty from the shackles of false religion and state-crafts, priest-tyranny and base living, inequality and inhumanity can only come from the dedicated religious souls and leaders. Revival of true universal religion can take place by "men such as those who....are always guarding with their lives the sacred fire of religion, without which the human life could not exist".<sup>13</sup> Often these great men are unnoticed by their contemporaries and derided and despised by all and sundry; often they pass away silently from the face of the earth unwept, unsung and unhonoured. Sometimes they end their lives in exile, in prison, in penal battalions amid the desolate ruins of true civilisation. Yet they are imperishable and indomitable and on them depends the rational and sane life of the entire humanity. They are indeed the religious persons in the highest sense of the term.

The religious men can revolutionise whole world because they are immune to the disadvantages and dangers that hinder a worldly man from exposing the existing order

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13. Ibid, p. 335.



of society. A religious person will free himself from all worldly bondages and he serves only the will of God in his dedicated life. He will have nothing but the truth and he is fearless enough to expose the falsehood of everything. Every religious man acts in this way because he no longer lives the life of a temporal and limited existence as irreligious people do but he lives "an eternal and infinite life, for which suffering and death are insignificant...." These men however humble they may be in their worldly position will set the whole world aflame with the spirit of true religion and inspire the hearts of all persons who thirst for renewal of religious life. Man is weak and blind animal until the light of God dawns on him and when the light burns in him he becomes the most powerful being on earth. For in him now works the divine energy of God, which is invincible and ever-triumphant.

Therefore, religion is not a belief settled once and for all in certain supernatural incident supposed to have taken place long ago. It does not exhaust itself in prayers and ceremonials; it is not the survival of the ancient superstition of fear resulting from ignorance as the scientists would have us believe. It is the immortal relation between man and God, between the purposive human life and the divine end, between the humanity and its glorious end and destiny. And this relation is in perfect conformity with reason and knowledge. So religion is the thing that alone leads all towards the propitious and destined goal.

Tolstoy maintains that human life or the law of life is such that the only way to improve it is by means of inward moral growth towards perfection. Every attempt to better the conditions of humanity by violent, material methods, by external actions will inevitably increase the volume of evils in this world. All these methods tend to



remove man more and more from the only possible way of truly improving the life of his. This truth has been again and again witnessed by man through the ages.

But how and why the religions are perverted? Tolstoy holds that all human activities are produced by the three motive causes namely, feeling, reason and suggestion or hypnotism. A man sometimes acts under the influence of feeling to get what he desires; sometimes he acts purely under the influence of reason. Reason shows man what he ought to do; often his actions are guided and determined by suggestions received from others. Under normal circumstances man acts under the combined influence and guidance of feeling, reason and suggestion. Under normal conditions of life feeling draws man to a certain activity, reason judges the activity in the light of present circumstances, past experience and future expectation and suggestion which now results from his own judgment helps man perform the action evoked by feeling and approved by reason. Therefore, three things are indispensable for all human activities of which the religious activity is most important.

In the spiritual sphere under healthy and normal conditions feeling evokes the need to establish man's relation to God, reason defines the relation, and suggestion impels man to the activity flowing from that relation. This is possible when only religion remains pure and unperverted. As soon as perversion takes place the suggestive element grows gradually stronger and stronger and correspondingly the activity of feeling and reason is weakened. The methods of suggestions are the same everywhere. They consist in taking advantage of man at the times when he is weak and very susceptible to suggestions (during childhood, death, birth, marriage etc.) and then acting upon him



through various means of art, painting, music, drama, teaching, advice to instil into him whatever the suggestors desire. Three things are generally suggested when perversion takes place in the domain of religion. These suggestions form the very basis for all other distortions and degenerations. The suggestions are as follows:

1. It is suggested that there are persons of particular type, who are only capable of acting as intermediaries between man and God.

2. It is suggested that miracles have been and are performed to prove and confirm the truth of what is being told by these intermediaries.

3. It is suggested that there are certain words repeated verbally or written in sacred scriptures which express the unalterable will of God or gods and which are, therefore, sacred and infallible.

As soon as these suggestions are accepted under the hypnotic spell they make the ground clear for the concealment of the religious law of the human equality. And out of this emerges the concept of inequality which gives rise to divisions among mankind and plants the seed of discord and disunity. Then separation into high and low caste, chosen people and gentiles, orthodox believers and heretics, saints and sinners takes place. The acceptance of inequality has also made possible the division between the rich and the poor, the master and the slave, the clergy and the laity. In this way the preponderance of suggestion in religion perverts it and brings the masses of people professing religion under the hypnotic influence of interested parties. We should remember that as soon as the distortion takes place the suggestions do not come from the feeling and judgment of reason of one's own self; then suggestions are not self-



evolved but are imposed on man from without by interested parties and persons.

## V

To-day the people of the world believe in sciences only; they live without faith. The educated people who are freed from the influence of so-called religion live without faith. The immensely poor and uneducated people who form the majority are really sincere but are completely under the control of hypnotism of the so-called leaders of religion and society. Tolstoy writes—"Faith is neither hope nor credulality, but a special state of the soul. Faith is man's consciousness that his position in the world is such as obliges him to do certain things".<sup>14</sup> Man acts according to his faith only because having known his position in the universe he naturally and spontaneously acts according to that position. Man acts religiously because he wants to conform his actions to his own convictions. Faith is the motive and justification of actions that result from the realisation of man's position in and his relation to the infinite universe or God. So the decision or realisation comes first and the act of faith follows as the natural consequence to it.

Faith is almost the same as religion; the difference between faith and religion is as follows—"by the word religion we imply something observed outside us, while what we call faith is the same thing, only experienced by man within himself".<sup>15</sup> Religion is matter of both internal and external affair, whereas the faith is exclusively an element of inner experience and conviction. When Tolstoy speaks

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14. *Ibid*, p. 304.

15. *Ibid*, p. 305.



of religion as something observed outside us he means that religion results from our relation to the infinite reality or God surrounding us. Hence the factors that determine the relation belong also to the external realm. The awareness of the relation which religion establishes is faith. So faith is nothing but man's consciousness of relation towards God and the motivating power of his actions that result from such consciousness. Religion in action is faith; faith is the inner state that forces man to act according to religious realisation.

Real faith cannot be contrary to reason and knowledge. Faith justifies religion and religious life; it actualises religion by being the motive power of human life and conduct. It gives courage to man to translate into action the convictions born of religion. In other words, the religion in practice is faith; yet faith is not action; it is cause of action—the state of mind that materialises the religious actions. It asks man to act in accord with religion; faith demands conduct which is in conformity with religious consciousness. True faith does not demand anything from God but is satisfied in acting according to religious illumination. The perverted faith demands that God in return of sacrifice and prayers should help man for the fulfilment of his wishes and desires. Perverted faith demands the service of God for man's material and other benefit. But in a true faith man feels that he is here on earth to fulfil the divine will and to serve his God unconditionally. Tolstoy sums up the fundamental essence of faith in the following words—"Since mankind has existed, wherever life has been, there also has been faith that gave the possibility of living. Faith is the sense of life, that sense by virtue of which man does not destroy himself, but continues to live on. It is the force whereby we live. If man did



not believe that he must live for something, he would not live at all".<sup>16</sup>

## VI

Tolstoy writes—"Complete union with the highest and most perfect reason, and therefore the complete welfare, is the ideal towards which humanity strives".<sup>17</sup> And religion can make possible such ambitious venture; for religion unites man with man and the union among mankind alone "affords then the highest attainable welfare, both physical and mental." Religion unites people by supplying identical answers to all men in given societies. But the religious unity of humanity can be fruitful with the help of reason. When reason acts in conformity with man's true nature and seeks to fulfil the purpose for which man exists it can really produce tremendous welfare and happiness. But when it acts in a way which is contrary to man's nature terrible calamities result and great sufferings are caused.

It is the natural desire of man to establish concord between his physical activity and rational or spiritual activity. He cannot be at peace until in one way or other he has attained the conformity. There are mainly two ways of attaining it. One way is to decide by the use of reason the necessity and value of certain actions and then to act accordingly to the dictates of reason. The other way is to act under the impulse of feelings and then to invent intellectual justification for such actions. The first method of conforming one's actions with one's reason is the characteristic of religious person. The second method is the characteristic of man who is not religious and who

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16. Quoted by William James in the Varieties Of Religious Experience, p. 181.

17. Letters And Essays, Vol. 1, p. 312.



has no standard to judge the value of his actions. The religious man is conscious of what is bad and good in his own activity and in that of others. So he is able to detect any contradiction between the demand of reason and his own and other people's actions. He will try his utmost to eliminate this contradiction for the welfare of all. Whereas the man without religion has no standard to judge the quality of his action; he is susceptible to immediate pleasures which unreasonable feelings may bring in. Thus he falls into contradiction and consequently suffers a great deal.

The modern world today presents a very gloomy spectacle. Tolstoy observes that never before religion has fallen to so low a level. Apart from the absence of religion the chief cause of the terrible cruelty of man on man is the refined complexity of modern life "which hides from men the consequences of their actions." He says—"..... today we kill people by so complex a transmission, and the consequences of our cruelty are so carefully removed and hidden from us, that there are no effects tending to restrain cruelty".<sup>18</sup> Today our material progress is maintained by such neglect of the most elementary demands of morality, "as humanity was never before guilty of."

The solution is to be found in the revival of true religion, in its awakening among all, in loving one another religiously. Men must consider all persons as brothers and consider human life as the most sacred of all things of the world. Men must treat one another religiously and in such acts and aspirations lies the future redemption of mankind. The material form in which the awakening consciousness of ours finds itself is the boundary that limits

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18. Ibid, p. 308.



the free development of our spirit. Matter thus is the limitation of the spirit and true spiritual life consists in going beyond the material limitation. When man understands this he becomes aware of his true eternal life. Materialists mistake that which limits life for the essence of life; so it is our duty to remember that this external life is the visible, changeable scaffolding of our essential life of the spirit. It helps us in our essential spiritual development; the scaffolding is temporary thing in our eternal life and after serving its purpose it is no longer wanted and is a hindrance.

There are agonising moments when man ceases to believe in spirituality and spiritual life temporarily because he forgets the true essence of life and identifies it with mere physical existence. When such moments occur Tolstoy advises us to keep calm and quiet and to treat ourselves as invalids. Then all will be well. Man fears death because he sees in death the end of his desires and their gratifications. But if the desires and their sense of gratification are replaced by the desire to do the will of God—to give oneself to God for the present and the future one would be able to overcome the fear of death gradually by the spirit of resignation to God and renunciation of desires. And if all the desires are transformed then nothing but the life remains, which is eternal and immortal. Therefore, to replace the earthly and temporary life by the life eternal is the aim of life.

Tolstoy observes that just as I know that there is an infinity of number so do I know that there is a God and that I possess a soul; God and soul are known to me by the same process with which I know the infinity. I am led to the knowledge and realisation of God by the question: whence come I? And I am led to the knowledge of the



soul by the question: What I am? Tolstoy shows that from whatever side I approach God the answer and the goal will be the same always. He writes—"The origin of my thoughts, my reason is God. The origin of my love, is also He; The origin of matter, is He too." So also I come to know the existence of the soul through similar methods. Tolstoy finally concludes thus—"If I consider my striving after truth, I know that this striving after truth is my immaterial basis, my soul. If I turn to my feelings of love for goodness, I know that it is my soul which loves".<sup>19</sup>

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19. Ibid, p. 369.



## CHAPTER VI

### WILLIAM JAMES ON RELIGION



*Trends Of Pragmatism—Ethics And Belief  
Free Will—Philosophy And Religion—God  
And Religion.*

"Mysticism is splendidly generous. It brings to man the fulfilment of his highest desires. Inner strength, spiritual light, divine love, ineffable peace. Religious intuition is as real as aesthetic inspiration. Through the contemplation of super-human beauty, mystics and poets may reach the ultimate truth."

—*Alexis Carrel*—

#### I

William James is one of the founders of the philosophical school of pragmatism. In order to understand clearly his comprehensive views on religion it is necessary to bear in mind the central concepts of pragmatism. James has analysed the religious contents, forms, experiences, consciousness from pragmatic view-points and through pragmatic methods. The word 'pragmatism' is derived from the Greek word 'pragma' which means action. The words like 'practice' and 'practical' are also derived from the same Greek word. Pragmatism, in short, holds that conduct or practical consequences and actions are the criteria of value. Ethics, philosophy, truth and the like should be judged and measured from the practical results



of their consequences and effects on the life of humanity. In other words, pragmatism consists in the method of treating events and objects with reference to their causes and concrete results. So pragmatism is more an attitude than a rigid and comprehensive school of philosophy. It is mainly concerned with the theory or method of treatment of events and things. James explaining the basis of pragmatism says that it is "the attitude of looking away from first things, principles, categories, supposed necessities; of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts".<sup>1</sup>

According to James, the criterion of truth is the result that follows from any assumption of the element of truth. So that which produces in practical life beneficial consequences is truth and a belief is true if the assumption of such belief is supported by the result which follows from the adoption of the belief. Thus the validity or efficacy of anything is conditional upon its empirical effects; abstract ideas, theoretical logic or philosophy and purely subjective factors of thought have no place in pragmatism. It upholds the truth of fruits and facts, results and effects, consequences and practical bearings of ideas and ethics, philosophy and religion. James speaking about the concept of truth says—"The 'true' is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief and good too for definite assignable reasons".<sup>2</sup> We find that the most distinctive feature of pragmatism is its tendency to identify truth with utility. It also holds that the process of reasoning and logic too is dominated by individual and material elements because reasoning cannot be in real life separated from purpose. We do everything including the mental activity of reasoning and intellection for a purpose

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1. Pragmatism, pp. 54-55.

2. Ibid, pp. 75-77.



to gain certain ends in life. Hence in a life of man the most important thing is the result that comes from the will and conduct, ideas and precepts. Similarly, will, emotion, cognition are definitely connected with the necessities of life. This school prefers the dynamic and purposive view of life and believes in the free creative activity of the individuals. It also maintains that ultimately knowledge and value, religion and ideas are rooted in the experience and practice in daily life. So pragmatism gives the actual dynamic life the supreme place and makes the practical consequences of such life the touch-stone of all values, metaphysical, social, ethical, religious. James writes—“Truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Its verity is in fact an event, a process; the process, namely of its verifying itself, its veri-fication”.<sup>3</sup>

James' concept of reality can be traced to his concept of experience; according to him, experience is an unbroken stream of continuum. It is a continuous whole which is broken up and classified into objects and their relation by the activity of mind. This analysis of experience's flow of continuum by mind is decisively influenced by the desires, aims and mental make-up of the percipient. The practical implication of the above position is of far-reaching significance. It makes man and his selective, analysing mind the maker of human destiny. That is, the reality is not given; it is not imposed on man from without arbitrarily. The reality is made by man. Man's creative ability and independence, his sense of responsibility of free action and the optimistic possibility of his life and dignity are recognised and stressed and upheld by James in particular and pragmatism in general. Reality is made by man in the

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3. Ibid, p. 201.



sense that it is ordered and moulded in relation to man by the selective faculty of his; reality is not made out of nothing. We should remember this important fact. Finally, James believes in the efficacy of the co-ordination of theory and practice, knowledge and action, idea and conduct.

## II

Therefore, there is no denying the fact that the philosophy of pragmatism has far-reaching applications and significance in the realm of religion and morality. Ethics has close relation with action and conduct; for ethics consists of practical codes of morality and human behaviour. Schiller, one of the founders of pragmatism, observes that pragmatism provides the ethical or moral basis of metaphysics by making conduct, actual consequences and will the basis of human life and its value. Pragmatism asserts that ethics as a practical science is the most fundamental of all sciences. Ethics, according to this school of thought, should be taken into account in the perspective of actual bearings of events and facts on human life. Hopes and aspirations, life's problems and questions, needs and human destiny are vitally connected with the concept of ethics. Hence the contents of ethics should be evaluated and judged by the empirical results that follow from its translation from mere codes into action. In other words, ethics in action is to be taken into consideration and not abstract codes of ethics.

Secondly, James and others maintain that all values and ideas are immanent and inherent in human experience. All good ideals are not transcendental in the sense that they are not beyond the pale of human achievement. The human endeavour can attain all good by persistent effort.



and determination. Therefore, all ideals are attainable here and now. But one should not attain them as ends but as means to ends in life. The value of the attainment of the good should be judged by its benevolent bearing on life as a whole. Pragmatism holds that man can through endeavour attain the highest possible good in life here and now. It preaches the doctrine of hope and courage, determination and optimism, will-force and victory of all honest strivings.

Thirdly, James and others do not try to abolish the basic distinction between 'is' and 'ought', 'good' and 'pleasurable'. Though pragmatism identifies good or truth with utility it does recognise the distinction between what is immediately pleasurable and what ought to be good and pleasurable. We may desire anything but that does not mean that our desire would be thought desirable in the light of reflection on consequences. Thus this school does not necessarily identify the good with the immediately pleasurable and it always maintains that the value of the utility of a thing is beneficial only when the utility produces lasting, harmless and truly happy results in human life. The value of ethics is grounded on ethical results.

The application of pragmatic method to the field of religion is also grounded on the test of practical consequences. William James accords the place of importance and necessity to religion on pragmatic grounds. He believes that religious faith is capable of making immensely valuable contribution towards the well-being of humanity. Faith or belief has a sustaining influence and salutary effect on life as a whole. Therefore, faith or belief, according to James, is the first condition of human existence.

Intellectual scepticism or cynical agnosticism or barren atheism can only produce abstract, impractical controversy



or soulless spiritual vacuum. But it cannot and does not produce in our life any zest for living or enthusiasm or dynamic impetus for the life of action and fulfilment. It cannot co-exist with life or help man solve the problems that face humanity everywhere. Even a sceptic has to live by faith in essential acts of living such as breathing, eating, drinking, walking, sleeping. These essential acts, in the final analysis, rest on faith; for instance, the act of breathing presupposes a belief that the air which is breathed is not injurious to health. Pragmatism also rejects the much-vaunted stand of rationalism by maintaining that rationalism itself is a supreme postulate of faith. A rationalist has blind faith in reason's supreme ability, in the absolute infallibility of reason as the instrument of knowledge. Ultimately reason and faith go hand to hand—one fortifying the other; without faith there cannot be any basis of reason.

So James and others do not condemn belief in God and immortality, in religion and divinity. James holds that faith must be given a fair trial in life and if faith produces sustaining, valuable and healthy results it must be accepted just as reason or any scientific fact is accepted. Repeated verification of faith's ability and value in practice gives faith undoubtedly a stamp of rationality and scientific validity. But if, on the other hand, faith cannot stand the above-mentioned test it must be unhesitatingly rejected. Generally there are false faiths and genuine faiths; James observes that genuine faith is as good as any scientific hypothesis which can receive the stamp of reality and value through verification in practical fields of experience. Therefore, true religious faith or belief is not afraid of scrutiny of reason and logic because it is based on solid and sound religious experience. Science and true religion are not antagonistic. Firstly, both are grounded on expe-



rience and aim to explain the experience; secondly, both adopt the method of postulation and work for and look forward to the verification of their postulation and anticipation.

James in his famous essay called *The Will To Believe* discusses with minute care the question of our right "to adopt a believing attitude in religious matter, in spite of the fact that our merely logical intellect may not have been coerced".<sup>4</sup> He maintains that the question of having religious faith and of assuming an attitude of disbelief is of great importance in our life. The choice or selection in this matter involves a living, unavoidable and momentous issue; it is a choice that would vitally affect our life and we can be indifferent to the issue only at our peril. We must boldly face the question and come to a decision.

In this problem, he holds, only two alternatives are available and open to us, namely the way of belief and the way of disbelief. The third alternative—the suspension of both belief and disbelief amounts to disbelief because the suspension of any kind of belief naturally renders the beneficial consequences that may flow from positive belief futile and ineffective. A man who suspends his belief in both belief and disbelief (if of course such position is at all possible) is practically in the camp of the positive disbelievers because by suspending his decision he becomes immune to the benefit that may flow from the positive belief in God and religion. Hence truly speaking there can be no third alternative for man; either man must have faith in God and religion or he must go without faith in God and religion. There is no middle path here. The sceptic who suspends his decision and judgment and whose motto is

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4. *The Will, To Believe*, pp. 1-2.



"better risk loss of truth than chance of error"<sup>5</sup>—also faces the risk of never being able to attain the religious truth—if there be any. So he suffers heavy loss if religion is true and belongs to the camp of the positive disbelievers.

Religion, James writes—"offers itself as a momentous option. We are supposed to gain even now, by our belief, and to lose by our non-belief, a certain vital good." It may be argued that to accept religion on this ground means the acceptance of it by the compulsion of passion. James points out that the non-acceptance of religion too is motivated by the urges of passion. The believer of religion is passionate enough to run the risk of untruth in the hope of realising the truth; while the non-believer is passionate enough to run the risk of truth in the hope of avoiding the error. The sceptic, James observes, in his denial of belief in God and religion shuts the only door through which may come the revelation of truths which are otherwise unattainable and which have the possibility of becoming our experience and thus getting verified. Belief in God begins like other beliefs as a provisional postulate and it receives verification afterwards. Therefore, James declares that there is sufficient justification of the will to believe and every one has the right under the circumstances to assume a believing attitude, James sums up the position in the following words—"Our passional nature not only lawfully may, but must decide an option between propositions, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds; for to say, under such circumstances, 'Do not decide, but leave the question open' is itself a passional decision, just like deciding yes or no, and is attended with the same risk of losing the truth".<sup>6</sup>

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5. Ibid, p. 26.

6. Ibid, p. 11.



In another very interesting essay entitled *Reflex Action and Theism* James attempts to show that God is the most suitable object of gaining complete satisfaction and fulfilment of three factors of mind from psychological view point. According to James, the three departments of mind are as follows—sensory impression, reflection and action. These three things mainly correspond to the sensory nerves, the brain and the motor nerves and these things compose the triadic structure of the nervous system. James maintains that in our daily life our sensible nature, thought and volition cannot attain fullest development or realise their complete potentialities. For only a part of the forces that come from without or external universe is received and acted upon by the self. Mind selects only a small part of influences from the outside world to turn the same into realisation and knowledge. And because we receive only a small amount of knowledge our volitional energy reacts to the meagre amount of knowledge received unsatisfactorily. So our volitional nature is neither satisfied nor fully utilised. It wants stronger and fuller channels to let free its pent-up energy. Our will and emotion demand manifestation and under their pressure our faculties of knowledge sedulously select and try to harmonise and order the events and facts in various ways to satisfy our will and emotion. But these efforts confined as they are within the narrow domain of a work-a-day world cannot give lasting stability and contentment to these dynamic aspects of human life.

Therefore, the theistic notions are a great attempt to give a lasting stability and satisfaction to the dynamic nature of man. The theistic picture and concept and belief, according to James, are the most satisfactory ones under these circumstances. The theistic picture is a complete and



exhaustive attempt to present to us the totality of all our sense-experiences which comprise the knowledge of universe and tries to interpret this totality as a cosmic, responsive power that responds to the call of our heart and will. This presentation of the totality of experience, call it God or the reality or the responsive power tends to give fulfilment and contentment to our entire dynamic, reflective and perceptive aspects of life. It also establishes harmony and concord among will, feeling and thought of ours. Thus theism is the most satisfactory solution of the problem of the conflict of will, feeling and thought because there is "not an energy of our active nature to which it does not authoritatively appeal, not an emotion of which it does not normally and naturally release the springs. At a single stroke, it changes the dead blank it of the world into a living thou, with whom the whole man may have dealings".<sup>7</sup>

### III

James upholds the doctrine that human will is free and is the maker of human destiny. He shows that the problem of free will cannot be solved on purely abstract and theoretical grounds. The application of a priori principles to this problem to come to any solution will be equally futile because the arguments in favour of free-will and against it are equally strong.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the only way to solve this problem is to approach it from the pragmatic view-point.

The considerations of practical experiences in life reveal that the concept of freedom has a very salutary influence on life. Every man instinctively feels that he can be the creator of his own destiny—that he can do

7. *The Will To Believe* etc., pp. 126-127.

8. See *Pragmatism*, pp. 115-121.



certain things if he wills. In other words, man possesses a definite sense of freedom—a certain conviction born of his very nature. Thus the concept of free-will is sustained and fortified by the natural impulse of man. Secondly, if free-will is not possible then the words such as 'should', 'ought', 'can' will be purely a misnomer. The non-acceptance of free-will will mean the end of selection and choice in action and aspiration and will, in experience and endeavour. Thirdly, the faith in determinism produces depression and pessimism, hopelessness and passivity and they are very harmful in their bearings on practical life of man. On the other hand, the belief in free-will breeds optimism, novelties in life, promise of future achievements and improvements. It breaks the monotony of life—the sense of dullness that results from endless repetitions of similar destinies. It introduces into the realm of life elements of potentiality and new possibility—the vigour and promise of better, happier, fuller days. James writes—"Freewill is thus a general cosmological theory of promise".<sup>9</sup>

But pragmatism steers clear of both pessimism and blind optimism; because while pessimism breeds depression blind optimism too produces a false sense of inevitable security which is also harmful for humanity. James holds that both pessimism and optimism involve an element of determinism because the former believes in the inevitable slavery and the latter in inevitable salvation. So James proposes to hold on to middle position between the two extremes and this golden mean owns that salvation or improvement is possible and the possibility can be turned into actuality solely by human endeavour. The success is yours provided you make honest and steadfast attempt for

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9. Pragmatism, p. 119.



it. In other words, the achievement is conditional upon human effort and determination and no determinism is involved here. This concept is termed by James as 'meliorism' to differentiate it from both pessimism and optimism. Explaining the point he writes—"Midway between the two there stands what may be called the doctrine of meliorism ..... Meliorism treats salvation as neither necessary nor impossible. It treats it as a possibility, which becomes more and more of a probability the more numerous the actual conditions of salvation become".<sup>10</sup> Man can make the world better, create his own destiny, attain ethical excellence in life, be happy and prosperous provided he struggles and exerts his free-will to usher in actual conditions for their consummation persistently and sincerely.

#### IV

James envisions and advocates fruitful co-operation between religion and philosophy. For he believes that philosophy as science of religion can do immense good for the establishment of religion on a strong foundation. He admits that science of religion can only suggest but cannot proclaim a religious creed. A sound philosophy of religion, according to James, can help the cause of true religion. He proposes to outline the following suggestions:

1. By testing the validity of spontaneous religious constructions through results of material science philosophy can eliminate doctrines that are known to be scientifically absurd.
2. Shifting out in this way unworthy formulations it can leave a residuum of conceptions that at least are acceptable and possible.

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10. Ibid, pp. 286-287.



3. The residuum can form the hypothesis which may be verified by all means available.

4. It can thus reduce the number, improve upon the definitions of the hypothesis, distinguishing between what are innocent over-beliefs and symbolism in their experiences and expressions.

5. As a result philosophy can offer mediation between different believers and help to bring about consensus of opinion.

6. It should find out the common and essential from the medley of individual and local elements of religious beliefs and experiences.

7. In doing so it should primarily depend on original material arising out of the facts of personal religious experiences.

8. It should not turn blind to concrete religious life or work in conceptual vacuum only.

9. "It would for ever have to confess, as every science confesses, that the subtlety of nature flies beyond it, and that its formulas are but approximations"<sup>11</sup>

## V

James observes that the theistic picture that our mind draws of the universe surrounding us is no more arbitrary than any scientific picture that our mind may choose to draw out of the present sensible world. The theistic picture is the truest possible one because it does satisfy the will greatly and we should remember that our cognitive nature works mainly to satisfy our will. Our will makes our cognitive nature work. Thus God is, James says "the most adequate possible object for minds framed like our own".<sup>12</sup>

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11. *The Varieties Of Religious Experience*, p. 446.

12. *The Will To Believe*, p. 115.



He does not propose to give any rigid and clearcut definition of God. He keeps the mind open and discusses the possibilities of various concepts of God according to different temperaments and mental and spiritual standards of peoples the world over. The concepts of God are related to and influenced by the different minds of different types of peoples. James personally prefers the pluralistic concept of God because pragmatism has faith in pluralism. So pragmatic concept of God lies between naturalistic and absolutistic concepts of God. James calls his philosophical position "piecemeal supernaturalism." He does not always equate God with the divine. God is not mere external inventor of 'contrivances' which are to be the instruments of His glorification; for God is not concerned with His glory. James does not believe in the metaphysical attributes of God such as self-sufficiency, ascity, immateriality, absolute completeness because these attributes are not significant for our practical religious life. Similarly, God's moral attributes, according to him, are ill-deduced. In this connection he says that modern idealism has said good-by to theology.

James holds that God should not only be visualised as Being having relation with individual subjects but also as Being having living relation with the wide, cosmic and transcendent Order. James is sure that God's presence is felt in prayerful communion. He is inclined to accept the possibility of various superhuman and supernatural forces which are responsive to the needs and aspirations of man and which may co-operate with man to bring about the salvation of mankind and the world. Thus his views on God may be a type of polytheism. But we should remember in this connection that pragmatism is never dogmatic in its views on God because it holds that the "evidence for God



lies primarily in inner personal experiences." James justifies the belief in God on the following factors.

Firstly, the belief in God involves a promise of future better life during the inevitable trials and tribulations of human existence. Secondly, it stands for perpetualisation of the ideal order of life without which human life would be meaningless and aimless phenomenon. Thirdly, it makes us believe that the tragedy and dissolution that constantly haunt humanity are relative and temporary affairs and not absolute and irrevocable things. Fourthly, it has an extraordinary tonic and pacifying power which is so necessary to make life incessantly harassed by hundred and one misfortunes and difficulties tolerable and full of sustaining hope. The belief in God may be in any form; the belief may assume diverse contents and aspects, implications and forces. But, in the final analysis, the faith in God boils down to this position for all practical purposes—"God's in His heaven; all's right with the world"—That is the real heart of your theology, and for that you need no rationalistic definitions".<sup>13</sup>

In his noted work called *The Varieties Of Religious Experience* which is a profound study of human nature in relation to religion and God, James studies in elaborate detail psychological, biological and philosophical notions of diverse religious phenomena belonging to different ages and lands, races and religions. In this book James pragmatically has subjected the religious feelings, experiences, ends, visions, actions and other characteristics to a penetrating analysis and evaluation and has drawn certain significant conclusions which are of immense importance and lasting value. To drive home his points he has presented a wealth

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13. Pragmatism, p. 132.



of events and incidents, facts and figures, from personal religious experiences of various types of religious peoples.

In discussing the religious experiences he adopts what is called the pragmatic method and takes into consideration only the individual experience pertaining to religion and the divine. He says—"The plain truth is that to interpret religion one must in the end look at the immediate content of the religious consciousness".<sup>14</sup> He discards subjects of institutional religion, ecclesiasticism, theology in his treatment of religious phenomena. He depends on personal documents to come to the conclusions pertaining to religion and religious experience or consciousness. He owns that religious values should be ascertained pragmatically by their results and fruitions in practical life and the world.

Hence the question of origin of religion as a criterion is useless. So any attempt to discredit religion on the questionable ground that it stems from a low origin or sexual urge does not signify the criterion of value because real value is to be ascertained by its satisfactory consequences. But James definitely rejects the sexual origin of religion. To denounce religion, James observes, on the ground of its so-called low origin would be as meaningless as would be the attempt to refute the value of a scientific discovery by showing the author's neurotic constitution. Similarly, the theories about religions being variable are of secondary importance.

James defines in the following words the term 'religion' as he understands it in his work—"Religion.....shall mean for us the feelings, acts, experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they approach themselves to stand in relation to what ever they may consider divine".<sup>15</sup> In

14. *The Varieties Of Religious Experience*, p. 13 (F. N.)

15. *Ibid*, pp. 31-32.



explaining what is divine he maintains that divine is something which rouses in men solemn, serious and tender reactions. It is a reality to which the individuals respond seriously and sincerely out of their own accord. He is of opinion that often the religious persons are neurally conditioned but religion cannot be condemned on that ground. It is also true that the religious reactions of persons are to a certain extent neurally conditioned. In other words, each person's emotional and other activities in relation to religious objects are conditioned by his or her neural capacities and conditions. Therefore, religion is mainly a biological reaction of individuals to something divine. And this biological aspect of religion shows that religion is a matter of essential necessity for human life. On this ground religion is more vital and enthusiastic than philosophy.

The dominant notes of religion are, according to James, inspiration for solemn emotions and the ability to overcome sorrow and miseries to which the worldly people are eternally subject. It is directly concerned with life and the destiny of human beings. But religion is fundamentally based on certain basic beliefs which are as follows:

1. "That the visible world is a part of a more spiritual universe from which it draws its significance."
2. "That union or harmonious relation with that higher universe is our true end."
3. "That prayer or inner communion with the spirit thereof (God or Law or Divine) is a process wherein the work is actually done, and spiritual energy flows in and produces effects, psychological, or material within the phenomenal world".<sup>16</sup>

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16. Ibid, p. 475.



Religion also includes these psychological characteristics:

1. "A new zest adds itself like a gift to life, and takes the form either of lyrical enchantment or of appeal to earnestness and heroism". 2. "An assurance of safety and a temper of peace, and, in relation to others a preponderance of loving affections".<sup>17</sup>

All the above beliefs and psychological characteristics are pervaded through and through with a deep and abiding sentimentality. The religious experiences are various and manifold. James supports the necessity and the value of variety of religious feelings and experiences because the variety keeps up the truth and value of various religious reactions of different subjects. There must be variety because the subjects themselves are never identical in temperament and response to objects of prayer and communion. Divine is not merely the owner of a single quality but it represents a group of many qualities. Each person is an inseparable part of entire humanity; so the sumtotal of reactions stands for greater religious truths and reality as a whole.

The value of religion lies in the fact that it brings about a co-ordination of knowledge and action so far as the religious persons are concerned. Knowledge, in the domain of religion, is translated into action, into daily conduct and living. Thus the gulf between theory and practice is sought to be bridged. James writes—"If religion be a function by which either God's cause or man's cause is to be really advanced, then he who lives the life of it, however narrowly, is a better servant than he who merely knows however much".<sup>18</sup> That is why the sciences of religions

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17. Ibid, pp. 475-476.

18. Ibid, p. 479.



are often dissimilar with experiences of living religions which ultimately symbolise feelings and actions and consciousness. James thinks that knowledge about life is one thing—the effective occupation of a place in life is another. Similarly, knowing does not mean the being; religion is not satisfied with knowledge of the divine or God; it works for realisation of the divine in real life and experience. Moreover, when we deal with general, abstract science of religions we are in the realm of mere symbols of religion. Only the personal religious experiences lead us directly to the realities of religion “in the completest sense of the term.”

The religious life, James holds, revolves round the desire and longing of the individual for his personal destiny. In other words, the craving for the consummation of private end is supreme with the individual at the beginning. Even religious thoughts and mystic communions are performed in the terms of individuality. Thus in religion man's personal eschatological aspect receives the greatest attention in his religious life at first. But James thinks that there is nothing wrong in it because being personally religious alone can a man find for himself the realisation of the supreme reality. One cannot catch hold of reality in any other way; and every man's private end is his great responsibility. And when the aspirant has reached the goal—when the realisation has changed his entire life he becomes the source of spiritual light, solace and peace to human beings who are less fortunate in this matter. So the religious man by being spiritually powerful first can serve humanity spiritually. The influence of saintly life on earth has been the greatest boon to all. We shall touch the point later on.

In religious life success comes rather from the inten-



sity of feeling than from the cogitations of the intellect. Hence in such a life intellect is subordinate to feeling. Feeling represents immense and unknown realm of being where real acts and realisations of religious life take place. James points out that the value of religious experience depends on three criteria namely, immediate luminousness, philosophical reasonableness, moral helpfulness. If the religious experience can fulfil these three criteria it is very valuable. Religion is sthentic affection and is meant for life and not for knowledge. It also postulates issues of facts; so it has a concrete value of its own. It is practical and its fruits are good for the practical life; true religion is opposed to fanaticism because it has nothing to do with ignorance and perversion. It would be wrong to hold that religion stands for any single principle or essence—it is rather a collective name involving various factors and ideals and allied things of the soul and the divine or God. Variety is the key-note of religion.

Therefore, in religion great variety of thoughts acts prevails but they have an abiding element of concord. We should always distinguish between the basic nucleus of religious experiences and beliefs and the intellectual and metaphysical principles that have been imposed on it. The essential factors which go to form the very foundations of religion have a unique harmony and concord. The feelings and conduct of religious persons down the ages possess wonderful similarity though their thoughts and ideas vary. James says—"When we survey the whole field of religion, we find a great variety in the thoughts, that prevailed there, but the feeling on the one hand and conduct on the other are almost always the same".<sup>19</sup> So more stable factors of

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19. Ibid, p. 494.



religion are feeling and conduct and not abstract theories and thoughts. The essence of religion is to be found in this universal unanimity of feeling and conduct of religious persons belonging to different religions and times, climes and civilisations the world over.

But to what psychological order these feelings belong? James thinks that the first criterion of such feelings which like a tonic refresh our hidden power and ability is an expansive cheerfulness or enthusiasm. This state generates the ability of overcoming sadness and imparting enduring qualities like patience, contentment, zest for noble life, courage and wonderment and the like. Secondly, it creates a faith-state producing new and highly beneficial psychological and biological conditions. Thirdly, the feeling not only produces subjective utility but also certain objective phenomena. James envisions a common platform for all religions and religious consciousness. It consists of two elements:

1. a feeling of uneasiness.
2. a feeling of its solution.

The uneasiness consists in the feeling that there is "something wrong about us" and the solution is to be found in the feeling that we can be saved from the wrong if we can establish contact with some divine power. Man instinctively feels that all is not well with him and the world—that there is a basic, persistent want—a feeling of imperfection is inherent in the way of life as it is. This feeling of 'uneasiness' is called in religion the divine discontent which forms the basis of the transcendental urge—the urge to go beyond the world of duality, of pain and joy, of suffering and misery. In highly developed beings this feeling of wrongness assumes a moral character and the possibility of liberation from that imperfection receives the mystical colouring. The feeling of imperfection makes



the subject aware of two contending parts of his being—the lower and the higher. He becomes conscious that the higher part of him is continuous with something which is functioning in the universe outside. He feels that by making connection with it through his higher self he may eventually save himself. This phenomenon may be a psychological one yet it involves spiritual and biological elements of great benefit and value. The entire personality undergoes transformation and a new life and the world are presented unto him.

But does the external divine exist at all? In replying to this question James observes that different theologies formulate different theories which are often at variance with one another. But they universally agree that the external divine does really exist. Some conceive it to be a personal God or gods and some love to visualise it as a "stream of ideal tendency embedded in the eternal structure of the world." But there is no doubt about it that the divine or God or Ideal or moral Order not only exists for the good of the world and creation but also constantly acts for ultimate redemption of all. The experiences of the union with God (or in the language of James 'more') are diversely expressed and realised. He thinks that we cannot rule out the existence of the unseen because whatever it may be it undoubtedly produces tangible and lasting results in this phenomenal and empirical world.

James attempts to outline general religious tendency and consciousness in the terms acceptable to scientific notions and attitude. He maintains that the central point of the entire issue consists of two things—the notion of 'more' (divine) and the meaning of union with it of religious subjects. The word 'more' translated into psychological term may mean "subconscious self." It is scientifically



true that there is more life in the totality of our being than we are generally conscious of at any time. It represents a vast, unexplored realm of self which lies beyond—unknown and inscrutable in the ordinary sense. Its real essence is hidden to us because it remains unmanifested in our day to day existence; our conscious existence stands out merely against this subliminal consciousness. Then there is no denying the fact that this subconscious self plays a decisive role in man's religious feelings and conversions and communions. So James proposes the following hypothesis: ".....whatever it may be on its further side the 'more' with which in religious experience we feel ourselves connected is, on its hither side the subconscious continuation of our conscious life".<sup>20</sup> That is, our subconscious self has underlying contact with the 'more' and the 'more' is basically connected with our subconscious self. In other words, James upholds the identity of the divine with the higher self or subconscious being of man.

James realises that this hypothesis is only a doorway and it cannot give satisfactory answer to the question: how far the sub-conscious can carry the subject towards the desired goal which is the union? So the proposition necessarily leads us to the realm of 'over-beliefs'. The over-beliefs represent the living domain of mysticism, conversion, rapture, transcendental idealism and spiritual interpretations of the mystics. They spring from the spiritual realisations of higher reality or divine or God and the over-beliefs are beyond the scientific or logical process or sphere. They are most interesting and valuable things of religious experiences and feelings; they are intense suppositions and metaphysical interpretations, of mystics and prophets,

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20. Ibid, p. 502.



saints and aspirants about the final union of selves with God or the divine powers. Here, James says, the visions, voices and other mystical openings present themselves. Apart from this we must recognise the basic fact that the conscious person is continuous with a wider self through which "the saving experiences come."

But what about the further limits of the extension of our personality? James holds that the above question can only be answered through our own over-beliefs. Further limits are essentially beyond the region of the senses and ordinary understanding. Yet this invisible realm is not merely a question of abstract ideal because it positively produces practical results in this universe. James writes—  
 "When we commune with it, work is actually done upon our finite personality .....for we are turned into new men".<sup>21</sup>  
 He holds that conviction that something is genuinely transacted in this consciousness is the very essence of living religion. So prayer in the wide sense of all communions and conversions is the very soul and essence of religion. Prayer is the actual proof of the value of religion.

The realised souls are a boon to the world and mankind. These saints symbolise help, sympathy, love which abound in them. They are ascetic and humble in their nature; they radiate purity and saintliness that flows from them is the best fruit of religious experience and life. James observes that the best fruits of religious experience are the best things "that history has to show and when we read them we feel encouraged and uplifted and washed in better mortal air." He says—"The highest flights of charity, devotion and truth, patience, bravery to which the wings of human nature have spread themselves have been flown from religious

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21. Ibid, p. 506.



ideals." He thinks that the fundamental inner conditions of a saint have the following practical consequences—(a) ascetism, (b) strength of soul, (c) charity, (d) purity. The following features also characterise the personality of a saint:

1. A feeling of being a wider life than that of this world's selfish little interests;
2. A sense of the friendly continuity of the ideal power with our own life, and a willing self-surrender to its control.
3. An immense elation and freedom, as the outlines of the confining selfhood melts down.
4. A shifting of the emotional centre towards loving and harmonious affections, towards 'yes', 'yes' and away from 'no' where the claims of the non-ego are concerned.<sup>22</sup>

James says that this unseen power with which the saintly person comes in contact is real because it definitely produces effects within a reality. So we have no excuse to call the unseen unreal or fantastic. This unseen reality is called God in theology with Whom we have business and vice versa. And when we open ourselves to His inflowing influences "our deepest destiny is fulfilled." His influences act on the personal centres of energy of various subjects and aspirants. The religious persons by a flow of spontaneous faith not only believe in their personal redemption but also in the ultimate liberation and salvation of all mankind. God's existence sustains the ideal order of the existence of the universe.

James supports the pragmatic method of treating the religious phenomena and the pragmatic interpretation because they are practically beneficial and theoretically sound.

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22. Ibid, pp. 266-267.



In the language of James the pragmatic approach gives religion the body as well as the soul, the poetry and prose of life. He thinks that religion which involves the personal destinies and inherent relations of persons with certain divine reality must continue to play in human affairs a during role. It fulfils a perpetual need of man and therefore it is the everlasting companion of man. In other words, religion is eternal and imperishable, stable and immortal.

James does not profess to know what is the exact nature of the divine or God or Reality apart from the fact that a definite element of divinity produces inflow of actual energy during the faith-state of the subjects. He says that he himself belongs to the supernaturalist school because he believes in the existence of reality beyond the world of space and time. He says—".....the total expression of human experience, as I view it objectively, invincibly urges me beyond the narrow scientific bounds".<sup>23</sup> He believes that by the communion with God new, unheard of forces come to the persons, which are otherwise unattainable through other worldly methods. Lastly, he is firmly convinced that we can experience the union with something definitely larger than our self and in that union we can find our great peace and the eternal fulfilment of our real being.

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23. Ibid, p. 509.



## CHAPTER VII

### RABINDRANATH TAGORE ON RELIGION



*Evolution And Man—The Problem of Evil*  
*The Nature Of Man—The Religion Of Man.*

"Here we stand suddenly at the confines of human thought and far beyond the polar circle of the mind..... Here we are concerned with the most exact of sciences: with the exploration of the harshest and most uninhabitable headlands of the divine "know thyself": and the midnight sun reigns over that rolling sea where the psychology of man mingles with the psychology of God."

—M. Maeterlinck—

#### I

Rabindranath Tagore envisions man as the potential end-product of the process of evolution. He thinks that the process of evolution has culminated in man and found in him a new sphere of infinite freedom and manifestation. Evolution was confined to the sphere of matter before the appearance of man on earth. It then experimented by evolving physical and animal forms of various types in the realm of physical creation. Now in man the process of evolution has reached the region of the mind or infinite spirit which is capable of great development and freedom of movement. The appearance of man has thus changed the course of evolution from "an indefinite march of physi-



cal aggrandisement to a freedom of a more subtle perfection." This trend has made possible man's progress to become unbound and has enabled him to realise the infinity of his hidden nature through the passage of eternal time.

Tagore sees no conflict between the evolutionary process and man who is the consummation of that process. It is the destiny of evolution to find fulfilment in its harmony with man. That is, the entire creative realm is Man's universe and the divine principle of unity is the fundamental characteristic of this creative life. It is the nature of evolutionary process to unfold the truth which is inherent in it; the truth is gradually manifesting itself and in man it has made its positive appearance in space and time. It is now becoming more and more explicit; the physiological process too has reached its finality in the physical form of man.

Tagore maintains that the evolutionary process of creation exhibits two basic trends. Firstly, it exhibits that infinite for its self-manifestation has descended to the multiplicity of the finite world. Secondly, it reveals that the finite for its self-realisation is trying to ascend to the realm of unity with the infinite. So the creative process exhibits on the one hand, the self-manifestation of the infinite, on the other, the self-realisation of the finite through its unity with the infinite. And the two basic movements mark the completion of the cycle of eternal Truth. Tagore says—"The Infinite for its self-expression comes down into the manifoldness of the Finite; and the Finite for its self-realisation must rise into the unity of the Infinite. Then only is the cycle of Truth complete".<sup>1</sup> The descending movement of the Infinite and the ascending movement of

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1. Creative Unity, p. 80.



the Finite are symbolical of the cycle of Truth. Infinite and finite are the two aspects of one Truth or Reality; they are interrelated and interlinked. In this process man plays the pivotal role because he is the mediator between both the realms of the infinite and the finite. With man evolution becomes spiritual and boundless; man rescues it from the captivity of material magnitude and ushers in the creative era of eternal beauty, truth and goodness.

The vision of unity is the underlying urge of creation. Both matter and spirit tend to reveal this hidden harmony of creation; multiformity is not opposed to uniformity and unity. It reveals the concord of diversity. Tagore says—“Thus we find it is the One which expresses itself in creation; and the Many, by giving up opposition, make the revelation of unity perfect”.<sup>2</sup> Man has organic unity with the entire universe and the realisation of unity is essential for him. Evolution or creation is like a perpetual song of the eternal Singer, God. The creator is pouring forth the joy and love of His Being in thousand radiant and beautiful forms and man should be the conscious partaker of the perennial flow of Joy, beauty and truth of creation. Man should do justice to God's manifestations in name and form.

## II

The problem of evil is also the problem of imperfection. Moreover, it involves the question of creation as a whole. In dealing with this important issue we must begin with the fact that creation is bound to be imperfect now because it is a gradual process and it is still in the making. So the problem of evil must be judged from this point of

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2. Creative Unity, p. 8.



view and the real question before us in this connection is this: is this imperfection the final truth, is evil absolute and ultimate?<sup>3</sup> In answer to this question lies the solution of the problem of evil in general and imperfection in particular. Tagore thinks that creation necessarily has boundaries and such physical and other limitations do not reveal its true criterion or purpose or ultimate end. Creation is a constant movement towards perfection and we must take into account this fact in our consideration of the problem of evil and imperfection. Creation at this stage is bound to remain imperfect because it is still moving towards perfection—it is still journeying through ups and downs towards its ultimate destination: perfection. So Tagore comes to the following conclusion: imperfection, evil, pain, finitude reveal “completeness manifested in parts, infinity revealed within bonds.”

Pain is not a permanent factor in our ceaselessly moving life. It is not an end in itself as joy is. So it has no “part in the true permanence of creation.” Mistakes, errors, evils, imperfections are temporary incidents in the progressive movement of life and creation. They are impermanent because they are not in conformity with the whole of unity. Tagore says—“As in intellectual error, so in evil in any other form, its essence is impermanence, for it cannot accord with the whole”.<sup>4</sup> At every movement of the whole evil or error is being corrected by the totality of things; hence evils are always changing—are always driven to destruction by the corrective progress of the unity. When we wrongly see evils, errors as stationary their actual dimension is immensely exaggerated. Tagore

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3. *Sadhana*, p. 47.

4. *Sadhana*, p. 49.



says—"Evil is ever moving.....it does not effectually clog the current of our life".<sup>5</sup>

Again, if we keep our searchlight of observation turned on the fact of death the world will seem to be a place of death—a huge "charnel house." Yet life as a whole gives little importance to death; only when we lose sight of the fullness of life of which death is a part death appears to be an overwhelming factor in our life. Tagore thinks that it is like looking at a piece of cloth through a microscope. The cloth then appears like a net and we shiver in fear as we gaze at the big holes. So Tagore comes to the conclusion that death is not the ultimate reality and "it does not blacken existence." Therefore, evil, death, imperfection cannot truly harm the current of life and they must in the course of time ultimately transform themselves and grow into good. In the language of Tagore, the potentiality of perfection outweighs actual imperfection. Pessimism too, according to him, is an intellectual or sentimental poss, for life is ever-optimistic; it always forges ahead. The progress of humanity is from evil to good, from imperfection to perfection and good is the only positive and decisive factor in the life of humanity and creation.

But what is goodness? Tagore answers that when men begin to have a wider vision of their true being, when they begin to realise that they are really larger being and not what they apparently seem to be, men begin to be conscious of their goodness or of their moral stature. This awareness of goodness and true destiny changes the outlook of men and they begin to distinguish between what they desire and what is desirable for their greater self. Tagore says—"For

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5. Ibid, p. 49.



good is that which is desirable for our greater self".<sup>6</sup> By the goodness or the moral faculty in us we realise that life is a continuous process—a whole, uniform thing. Unselfishness is the basis of goodness or morality and to live in supreme goodness is to have the display of infinity in our daily life. Goodness springs from the realisation that man's individuality is not his highest truth, and that there is in man something which is universal.

Tagore concludes that pain, evil, death are inevitable in this world of imperfection aspiring for perfection. They are, in one sense, aids to the progress of man towards self-realisation. Dark things of life are produced by the conflict of the infinite with the finite for the former's manifestation. Conflict presupposes harmony and the process of development. Man the eternal gains in spiritual energy by fighting against these limiting conditions of life on earth. So evil is necessary for our moral existence and development and pain is to be judged against the background of cosmic evolution. Sufferings are the privileges of man because they indicate the propulsive urge of man for his inherent freedom and infinity.

So also death is not the end of man. It is only the call of the infinite to another realm of life eternal. Death is a necessary step in the process of evolutionary advancement towards ultimate perfection and goodness. When the self of man clings unto separateness and isolation—it is the chain of captivity of the finitude that binds him. Tagore observes—"Life's tragedies occur to reveal that eternal principle of joy in life, to which they gave a rude shaking".<sup>7</sup> Similarly, sin is nothing but the transgression against the self. The evil which hurts the soul in us is

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> Creative Unity, p. 5.



sin. Therefore, sin is not natural to man; it is a foreign element in the life of man. It is not real and can be, therefore, overcome through effort and progress. Tagore maintains that it is criminal to act against man—it is sin to act against the divine in us. He observes—"The evil which hurts the natural man is pain, but that which hurts his soul has been given a special name, it is sin".<sup>8</sup>

### III

Tagore visualises two poles of human personality; at one pole the human personality is one with the comprehensive unity of creation; at the other he is aware of his separateness from the rest of creation. He holds that the true foundation of human being is to be found in the unity of being with the rest of the universe. Yet the sense of separateness is stubborn and persistent in spite of "the tremendous gravitation of all things towards the manifestation of unity." Man as separate individual feels that his personality is absolutely unique in itself, that he is incomparable; out of this attitude springs the spirit of isolation. But this outlook is basically wrong. Man who is ignorant of the larger unity of all struggles perpetually against all forces that try to undermine this spirit of isolation and separateness. Tagore writes—"That this separateness of self is considered by man as his most precious possession is proved by the sufferings he undergoes and the sins he commits for its sake".<sup>9</sup> Yet the uniqueness of individuality is very valuable and in the uniqueness of the individual the universal is seeking its own consummation. The evil comes only when self makes conscious efforts to isolate itself from

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8. Personality, p. 86.

9. Sadhana, p. 70.



the rest of creation. The uniqueness of the individual is real and valuable when it is in perfect conformity with the entire reality. It is enslaving when it tends to undermine the unity of all things. In other words, the individuality at the cost of unity is evil; the individuality in unison with unity is propitious.

It is wrong to think that self has its complete meaning in itself. It is ignorance that fetters us by making us think that self is an end in itself. Self has inherent universality. Self in the wider sense transcends the limitation of every kind. The function of religion is to release man from the stubborn sense of separateness of self; religion tries to make man the partaker of the divine unity. Narrow notions arising out of ignorance and false sense of isolation make man the prisoner of the restricted self or ego. Religion releases him from the prison and makes him a significant part of the whole of creation. In one word, it makes man universal. Yet there is no negation of individual uniqueness here; here individually separate being is not in conflict with universality but is in perfect accord with all.

Therefore, freedom of self is not egoism or isolated self from all but is its unique, natural development in unison with the entire world. Self-sacrifice and not self-gratification or self-aggrandisement is the law of true development of self. It involves self-transcendence and makes the self full of glory and beauty. By transcending its narrow bonds self reveals its true nature and meaning. The very process of self-sacrifice makes the self perfect like a flower that "has blossomed out from the bud, pouring from its chalice of beauty all its sweetness."

The aim of the self is the attainment of its nature and perfection through the ways of self-abnegation, ser-



vice and love. Our self must find unity with all through love and thereby gain its true freedom and stature. And "so long as it hoards its possessions it keeps itself dark, its conduct contradicts its true purpose".<sup>10</sup> Every man must pass through his selfhood to attain finally the freedom of soul which is harmonious. In union with all self becomes perfect. Tagore says—"The emancipation of our physical nature, is in attaining health, of our social being in attaining goodness and of our self in attaining love".<sup>11</sup> Man misses himself when he is alone or isolated. Life is not a passive unit of self-subsisting thing. Tagore writes—"It is the very characteristic of life that it is not complete within itself; it must come out." And man finds his larger self which is universal in nature in his broad human relationship and his 'multi-personal' humanity is immortal.

So man has apparent, individual, limited self and the real, universal and eternal self. In the ultimate sense of universal unity man is eternal in his love and boundless in his aspiration. Individual man is subject to the laws of limitation; he is the potential universal Man. He is the seed that must fructify into the tree of universal Man. Perfection is inherent in man the eternal and to realise it in reality the individual man must struggle and aspire. This potential perfection is constantly urging the individual man to realise it in reality through work and thought. Man should attain his immortal stature which is infinite and perfect. Thus Tagore distinguishes the individual man from Man the universal.

The universal Man symbolises the totality of manness or manhood which also includes man's inherent freedom

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10. Ibid, p. 76.

11. Ibid, p. 83.



and immensity, his unlimited spiritual and creative potentialities. The individual man is conditioned universal Man trying to make Himself unconditional. The individual man happens to be the embodied expression of Man the great and eternal. Tagore declares that the individual man must exist for Man and should attempt to manifest Him in selfless work and science, philosophy and literature, art and service, worship and religion. Deep within, behind the phase of the individual self dwells in man the eternal spirit of human unity which is beyond our direct, ordinary experience. Man the eternal who is the symbol of human unity often tends to contradict the trivialities of man the individual's daily life and runs counter to his selfish desires, plans and conventions. Often it inspires man to works that manifest a universal vision of spirit. It inspires man to do noble, selfless service and serve the causes of truth, goodness and various ideals.

Tagore conceives of a Supreme Person or Man the universal or God or the Super-Soul Whose spirit is over all individuals. This Soul permeates all moving beings and things and "is the God of this human universe." All human beings share His Mind in their true knowledge, love and service. The highest aim of human life is to reveal more and more the Super-Soul in it through renunciation and service. The Supreme Man is working and constantly and gradually expressing Himself through the individuals. Individuals may not be always aware of the gradual process of unfoldment but this ignorance cannot obstruct the path of the Supreme Man Whose gradual manifestation in persons is inevitable and over-powering. Fortunately man does not accept as final what is apparent and his constant struggle has been to break through the shackle of all limitations. All individuals go to make the Man the eternal. Tagore writes



—"We realise the Supreme Man who has individual limitations through our limitations".<sup>12</sup> Tagore's concept of Man represents the totality of humanity and its implicit and explicit potentialities. Truth, Tagore observes, lies in the rational harmony between the subjective and objective aspects of reality and both the aspects belong to Man the universal or Super-personal Man.

There is a conflict in the apprehension of truth between the universal human mind and the same mind confined in the individual mind. The religion of man aims at the reconciliation of the Supreme Man with the individual being. This Supreme Man is also the supreme Godhead and the realisation of the Supreme Man is also the attainment of God. He is infinite in essence and finite and infinite in His manifestations; His finite manifestations are among other things the individuals. So every man must try to live and reveal in his own personality the Man or God through creative and selfless life. The individual man becomes religious and truly creative when he becomes conscious of the work and the aim of the universal Man—when he spontaneously co-operates with Him to usher in a new creative era.

#### IV

We have already seen that the divine principle of organic unity is the pre-determined and predominant note of creative or evolutionary process. Man has unity and kinship with entire humanity and physical nature surrounding him. So man has fundamental unity with the rest of creation. When this unity becomes not a mere concept but an energising truth which is vital and life-giving man

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12. The Religion Of Man, p. 222.



becomes spiritual. For this consciousness of unity is spiritual in nature and man's endeavour to be true to this unity in life constitutes his religion. Tagore says—"....the consciousness of this unity is spiritual, and our effort to be true to it is our religion".<sup>13</sup>

The awareness of unity of the life is also the awareness of the existence in us of an indwelling Divine Being or Person or principle. It is Man the eternal in us and we as human beings exist for the divine in us—for the working out of the unity which perpetually exists. Yet mere awareness of unity or the presence of a divine element in us is not enough. It is the duty and religion of man to express the indwelling Divinity through religiousness. Tagore says—"This is his religion, which is working in the heart of all his religions in various names and forms".<sup>14</sup> So man stands at the centre of spiritual evolution and religion is concerned with man's inner self and transformation. Tagore holds that inner meaning of religion has nothing to do with a God of cosmic force, but it has everything to do with the God of human essence. Religion is a human religion—a human revelation; it is concerned with human destiny, human values and truths.

Man does not represent the phenomenon of material volume or measurement. He is infinite in essence; he is a perpetual process operating beyond space and time. He observes—".....the manifestation of Man has no end in itself—not even now. Neither did it have its beginning in any particular time we ascribe to it".<sup>15</sup> The creation has been made possible by the constant self-surrender of the units to the totality of existence. In physical sphere

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13. *The Religion Of Man*, p. 16.

14. *Ibid*, p. 17.

15. *Ibid*, p. 21.



creation exhibits the process of unity of units; in the physical world there is unbroken continuity of relation "between heat and cold, light and darkness, motion and rest." Tagore observes that that is why these opposites do not bring confusion in the universe but harmony. The principle of unity is operating everywhere. In the spirit-realm too the unity is upheld by the constant self-surrender of the individuals; Man the eternal is claiming self-surrender from the men, the individuals. And man's religion comes into being when he gives up his isolated personality to embrace his own spiritual universality.

There is in man eternal urge for perfection; man seeks to attain the ideal perfection through constant expansion of knowledge's horizon, through love and power. The universality is the ideal perfection and the endeavour to reach this state tends to make the aspirant truly universal. Speaking about the true meaning of religion Tagore says—"Dharma (religion) is the innermost nature, the essence, the implicit truth, of all things. Dharma is the ultimate purpose that is working in our self".<sup>16</sup> Tagore equates religion with the true purpose and aim of life, with the essence and nature of being. We must remember this important fact.

Today the spirit of man dominates the realm of creation and man's creative personality has ushered in the new era in the kingdom of life. The thing of utmost importance in the realm of man is the element of 'surplus' of thought and dreams. Man alone transcends the limitation of mere physical existence of a stone, or a plant, or an animal. Man has the 'surplus' of thought and dreams; man not only lives but is also distinctly a creative being; he not only

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16. *Sadhana*, p. 74.



receives but also is capable of giving. Tagore observes —“From his original serfdom as a creature Man takes his right seat as a creator.....As an animal he is still dependent upon Nature; as a man he is a sovereign who builds his world and rules it”.<sup>17</sup>

At this point, Tagore observes, comes man's religion whereby he realises himself in the perspective of the infinite and eternal. Religion is the limitless infinity of spirit which is beyond the dimension of the world of space, time and causality in the spiritual sense. Religion is not connected with the physical or material interest, value and utility alone. It is symbolical of the great 'surplus' in man and of man's true creative spirit. The surplus makes man aware of his limitless dimension of self, of his wider, deeper and harmonious relationship with the universe and God. In his moral life man is conscious of his obligation to the universal life and his creative freedom as a dynamic being. In his spiritual life man is aware of the sense of inherent union with all of his free will that culminates in universal love.

Religion finds expression in the realisation of love that has its essence in the boundless surplus in man. Love emancipates man's consciousness from the illusion of separate self. It is the true spirit of civilisation leading all to unity and truth under one supreme Being. God creates beauty and asks us to give Him our precious gift of love. Tagore thinks that give and take policy should be the guiding principle so far as God and the devotees are concerned. The one-sided love by human beings has the importunity of a slave. God's love finds fulfilment and completion in man's love for Him and vice versa. So Tagore says—

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17. The Religion Of Man, p. 44.



".....the lover man, is the complement of the Lover, God, in the eternal drama of existence."

Love involves the dualism of separation and union; the lover seeks his own self in his beloved. Tagore speaking about the importance of separation in the drama of love writes—"It is the joy that creates this separation, in order to realise through obstacles the union".<sup>18</sup> Man's individual soul has been separated from the supreme soul but this separation is not absolute or eternal. It enriches love and makes it full by union through annihilation of obstacles. Tagore says—"The human soul is on its journey from the law to love, from discipline to liberation, from the mental plane to the spiritual".<sup>19</sup> Love is joy and the perfection of consciousness; it is the truth and meaning of creation; the personal and impersonal are made one in God; in love the infinite and the finite are harmonised. The lover constantly gives himself up to lover forever.

Religion is realisation in action. True activity cannot cause restriction of the free spirit of the soul. Soul cannot have freedom within itself and that is why it wants external action and the soul is ever-releasing itself from bonds of slavery by creative activity. Action actualises what is latent and potential in man and this manifestation leads him to his dynamic life of fulfilment and freedom. Tagore writes—"Thus is man continually engaged is setting free in action his powers, his beauty, his goodness, his very soul".<sup>20</sup> In the act of materialisation of what is potential lies the freedom of man. To work under compulsion is bondage; so also the work arising out of the urge for personal gain. True action is free and creative; it universalises man and

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18. Sadhana, p. 105.

19. Ibid, p. 106.

20. Ibid, p. 121.



fulfils his ultimate mission on earth; it establishes life's relation and unity with the rest of creation. In action man lives for others and realises himself by serving humanity. All actions should be dedicated to God and this spirit of dedication is the joy of freedom and actions consecrated to God are paths to liberation and union with God.

Religion is the realisation of beauty that is everywhere. As long as our realisation is imperfect or incomplete a division is bound to remain between things beautiful and ugly. Yet this division is apparent because true beauty is omnipresent and is capable of giving us joy in all things. Tagore says—"Everything is capable of giving us joy." We fail at first to realise joy and beauty in all things of creation; so we begin our appreciation with a division. We divide things into two groups—beautiful and non-beautiful. As our acquaintance with beauty ripens "the apparent discords are resolved into modulations of rhythm." Then we realise the harmony of beauty with all things without attachment to self-interest and the lust of the senses. In other words, when we are able to see beauty of all things without attachment to self-interest and lust of the senses we have the true vision of omnipotent beauty. There are no doubt ugliness and discord in the world. But they are unnatural and negative elements that momentarily darken our apprehension of beauty which is ubiquitous. Untruth, ugliness, discord arise in our mind when we go "counter to the eternal law of harmony which is everywhere." Tagore says—"As we become conscious of the harmony of our soul, our apprehension of the blissfulness of the spirit of the world becomes universal and the expression of beauty in our life moves in goodness, and love towards the infinite".<sup>21</sup>

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21. Ibid, p. 141.



Religion is the realisation of the infinite. Man's life finds complete fulfilment in the attainment of God alone. The attainment of Godhead does not signify addition to man's belongings. God cannot be found in any particular place or thing. He cannot be acquired by any process, for the attainment does not imply any idea of possession. Tagore declares that God is realised when we give up ourselves unto Him Who is everywhere. So our religion should consist in daily process of surrendering ourselves unto God, in removing all obstacles to union, in devotion and service, in goodness and love. We can never reach the infinite through the additions to our wealth—through extension of things and senses which are inevitably finite. To go beyond all possessions is the eternal urge of our soul and through renunciation and self-surrender we can attain God. Tagore observes—"We see everywhere in the history of man that the spirit of renunciation is the deepest reality of the human soul".<sup>22</sup>

Infinite has also a personal aspect and Tagore gives emphasis on this personal aspect of God. He visualises God as possessing love, mercy, and eternal grace. He thinks that personal relationship between man and God, between man and nature, between man and man is possible and desirable. He views God or the infinite in relation to human life and values and the finite world. He speaks of God as King, Master, Father, Lover, Bridegroom but not as Deity.

The free spirit of man is divine and it alone can claim kinship with God when it is not vitiated by the influence of animal life. Free spirit is the expression of the Infinite and entire humanity belongs to a divine unity. Free spirit

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22. Ibid, p. 151.



which is also creative springs from the great surplus and from it springs science, philosophy, art, social ethics and other things of civilisation and culture. Tagore writes—"These things may not be consciously religious, but they indirectly belong to man's religion".<sup>23</sup> Any creative manifestation is spiritual and should be co-ordinated in one great religion of man. All man's creations represent his perpetual attempt to reach perfection in thought, deed and dream and in immortal symbols of art.

Man faces the eternal in his life; he faces the eternal question of his being and essence. The answer to the eternal questions springs from man's religion. One should try to seek the essence of religion of every race not in the race's concepts about gods and goddesses but in the race's concepts of Man who has always worked for his infinity and sovereignty in the face of danger and death. Man's religion is to be found not in gods but in his own being and creative manifestations. Man's religion springs from his conviction that he is not really limited, individual existence; he is not what he superficially appears to be. In order to know his real nature man conceives of a higher being who is superior to him but with whom he has an abiding kinship. In all religions thus man seeks for his own supreme value and true self in something divine or in some divine principle or order. Religion here touches the realm of God in man and the existence of a religion is justified by its conviction of the essential divinity of man—by its assertion of the unity of man and God.

The human element of religion is justified by Tagore. For human perfection is the aim of religion. Great religions give emphasis on this aspect and great religions

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23. The Religion Of Man, p. 60.



bring change of attitude and glorify human values through great spiritual evolutions. That is why Tagore gives supreme emphasis on man, on man's infinite self and possibility. He maintains that every truth is attainable by man. There cannot be anything that cannot be "subsumed by the human personality." This fact proves that the eternal universal truth is also the human truth. The universe is the human universe. Tagore lays stress on the subjective element where the relation of universe with man is involved. The human touch and comprehension give value and reality to the universe. When the world is in harmony with man, the eternal man knows it as truth and comprehends it as the expression of beauty. The totality of all human experience comprehends all truth, beauty and goodness and knowledge about man, the world and God.

Science is concerned with impersonal world of truths; it is not concerned with individuals. Religion, Tagore thinks, realises these truths and links them up with deep human needs. Religion connects human needs with truths and values for the fulfilment of human needs and for the utilisation of these truths and values. Truths and values have no significance if they are unrelated to and cut off from the human world of need and aspiration. Religion gives reality and significance to these truths and values and through religion man knows them as good and thus the harmony of man with them is established. So truth, beauty and goodness are not independent of man. Man's realisation of them becomes complete through the painful process—through mistakes, blunders, experiences and gradually illumined consciousness. There is no other way of knowing the truth; there are only human ways and means. Anything that is beyond human understanding is meaningless to man.



Tagore thinks that the truth which is God or universal reality must be essentially intelligible to human apprehension and attainable by human endeavour. Otherwise whatever man realises as true cannot be called truth; our organs of thought and understanding are human. Yet the human element is not equated by Tagore with limited, imperfect and unregenerated human individuality or its capacities. He speaks of human element from the highest stand-point. Truth is attainable by human organs when they are purified, widened and transformed into the instruments of penetrating spiritual power and vision. Only spiritually developed persons who have surrendered themselves unto God and who have become religious through renunciation and moral ways can comprehend the eternal truths and beauty and goodness. And in this sense Tagore thinks that there is no truth which is unrelated to humanity. Speaking about the aim of religion envisioned by him Tagore says—"My religion is in the reconciliation of the superpersonal Man, the universal human spirit, in my own individual being".<sup>24</sup> Here Tagore equates the Man or God with the universal human spirit. In other words, the universal human spirit is Man the universal or eternal or God or Reality.

The human values and truths are of singular importance in the domain of man's religion. All great religions have their origin in great persons who have represented in their lives great truths which are human and good simultaneously and not cosmic or unmoral. The great souls have rescued religion thus from the dark realm of inhuman factors and brought it to the inner heart of humanity for the welfare of mankind.

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24. The Religion Of Man, p. 225.



We have already seen that Tagore gives emphasis on the close relation between man and God, man and man, man and nature. God is in man and when man directly apprehends the humanity of God God is not abstract, quality-less, feature-less, static, absolute in which man vanishes away in an indefinite formlessness. This type of union, Tagore thinks, cannot be the aim of the religion of man, though he does not call in question the possibility of such mystic union. He is in favour of seeing man as perfect human being so that man can realise the humanity of God. And this type of union makes man's God "no longer an outsider to be propitiated for a special concession."

God cannot be equated with any unknown principle because such conception leaves human personality in a void of negation. Human senses and emotions, creative spirit and love, service and adoration, feeling of universal sympathy and dedication to noble ideals when fully developed and purified are capable of developing man's spiritual and religious nature. But Tagore's concept of humanism has nothing to do with egoism and selfishness, megalomania and assertion of personality at the cost of humanity as a whole. We should remember that the criteria of his religion are renunciation, self-surrender, moral excellence, spiritual unity with all. He speaks of man and upholds the essential human values in the perspective of the universal and moral ideal and life of dedication, service and universal love. Tagore's Super Man is symbolical of the infinity of God and the creative continuity of human race.

The human personality is a self-conscious principle of larger unity within man "which comprehends all the detail facts that our individuality has in knowledge, in feeling, wish and will and work." The definition of human personality is the ideal one, but in the negative aspects it is of



course limited to the individual separateness. In its positive aspects the human personality always extends itself to the realm of infinite through the advancement of its knowledge, love and other activities. Religion seeks the highest value of man's existence in the self of man. It rouses in man dreams and imaginations, and the faith in the ideals visualised. Tagore writes—"Our religion represents to us the dream of ideal unity which is man himself as he manifests the infinite." Man naturally turns from the proximity of matter towards the source of spiritual value because his real abode is the domain of the spirit.

According to Tagore, man's first primitive religion was physical; it came from his sense of wonder and awe at the manifestation of powers in physical nature and from his attempt to win from them for himself and for his peoples fortune and prosperity. Then came the inevitable leisure for man and through the process of reflection he came to realise the mystery of his inner self and its unique importance. Slowly and gradually the self or soul gained the highest importance to man and he sought his self's fulfilment and unfoldment in the truth and idea of a high Person or a Being. In this way man came to the idea or conception of personal God. Here religion moved from things physical, external and magical to things moral and spiritual. Man's inward turn marked the advancement of religion from the sphere of matter to the domain of the spirit.

The highest aim of religion is the life's fulfilment in union of man with Narayana—the supreme Reality of man. The supreme Reality is the infinity of humanity or God. The spiritual infinity has nothing do with physical bigness. Man can realise infinity in this very life and to realise it is to be true to one's true nature. This is also man's



religion. Yet union of man with Reality or God or super-man is not a passive state of union. It is a dynamic state of unity whose main characteristic is creative manifestation. But how one can effect the union? One should give up all selfishness, narrowness and restricting sense of me and mine. He should surrender his all unto the whole. Tagore says—"Wherever in the human world the individual self forgets its isolation, the light that unifies is revealed".<sup>25</sup> The religious man must give up selfishness for the sake of spiritual union and to attain the universal vision and knowledge. He should cultivate the greatness of soul and thus try to identify his soul with the soul of all. It is not so difficult a task for sincere persons. One can realise the infinity inherent in one by being constantly and steadfastly charitable, good and loving to all. Thus the dynamic life belonging to the unity is based on action and contemplative life. In fact Tagore observes that in truly creative life alone a man realises his spiritual nature. Speaking about salvation he says that it is the everlasting cry of humanity. Salvation is not to be in some truth beyond the pale of humanity; it is in the truth that dwells in the ideal man.

Tagore maintains that modern civilisation has made man forgetful of religion and of the divine touch in life. Yet the true aim of civilisation is to express man's religion; the culmination of it is not to be found in man's cleverness, power and possession. The positive purpose of civilisation is to bring about the manifestation of divinity which is in all. It is rooted in man's self-sacrifice and creative spiritual energy. That which distinguishes man from the animal is the fact that man does not exhaust himself in his claims and bare necessities of life but he

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25. *The Religion Of Man*, p. 232.



expresses himself in selfless acts and creations and dedications to beautify, purify and deify all. This creative energy sustained by noble convictions goes to form the basis of ideal home, society and civilisation.

The religious man always tries to be great in renunciation which gives him the wealth of spirit and the strength of truth. Religion releases man from the illusion of power and leads him to the fullness of perfection, eternal peace and freedom. One must have faith in the possibility of perfection for such faith unfolds the path leading to it. Our greed stands in the way of perfection because it diverts consciousness towards things material from the supreme value of spirit. Tagore maintains that the animal man represents a temporal duration. That is, the animal man is only a temporary incident in the evolutionary progress and eternal life of man. The human element in him is his reality which has everlasting life for its infinite development. In his empirical, physical self man is conscious of his individuality while in his soul he is aware of the Universal Man in him.

Man should have faith in man the spiritual; and he should try to cultivate his relationship with the great unknown. Above all he should be aware of the spirit of unity of all things. Tagore writes—"Man's reverential loyalty to this spirit of unity is expressed in his religion".<sup>26</sup> When man becomes conscious of this unity he knows his God as one and universal and the awareness proves that the truth of human unity is the truth of man's God. In this way the realisation of human unity brings in the awareness of God's pervading presence in all and His manifestation in the unity of beings. The consciousness of

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26. Ibid, p. 143.



God tends to transcend gradually the limitation of race and gathers together all human beings within one spiritual circle of union. The feeling of spiritual union with all is the consciousness of God. God unites all and in Him we are all one and universal.

Man must have faith in the victory of Man in the real sense of the term ultimately. But it is wrong to assume that the noble universal and spiritual qualities spontaneously express themselves in man. Often the animal in man is the master of his rational or spiritual self. So we need the presence of religion and influence of religion to end and transcend the contradiction between animality and spirituality in us. The main function of religion consists in reconciliation of this contradiction by subordinating the brute nature in man to the true spiritual self of man. When this is done all persons can actively co-operate with work and purpose of the divine will to usher in the era of peace, love, service, truth, beauty and goodness. Therefore, man's achievement goes far beyond his immediate need and his self ever tries to proceed towards the endless further as Tagore calls it. This proves to man the truth of his own infinity and makes his religion real to him; for the struggle for liberation brings forth his own truth, beauty and goodness. Tagore says—"Only for man there can be religion, because his evolution is from efficiency in nature towards the perfection of spirit".<sup>27</sup>

Finally Tagore's conclusion regarding religion is that whatever name may have been given to the divine reality it has found its highest place in religion owing to its human character. It has given us a meaning to the concept of sin and purity and has offered us an eternal background to all

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27. *Ibid*, p. 205.



ideals of perfection which have their harmony in man's own nature. So religion is the profound love which is the feeling of union for a "Being who comprehends in himself all things that are human in knowledge, will and action".<sup>28</sup> Thus the love of man is the very basis of Tagore's religion just as his philosophy is frankly geo-centric. Man the divine is here the only measure of all things including religion, philosophy, art and other allied things. Lastly, Tagore holds that every soul has sprung from the eternal spirit, lives in and moves towards it constantly. At the one end the soul has attained its goal and at the other it is ever in the act of attaining the goal. He says—"He who has been gained in eternity is now being pursued in time and space".<sup>29</sup> Tagore thinks that the infinite can be found and realised within the form and the eternal freedom is the love. Religion is the joy of attaining the infinite within the finite.

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28. Ibid, p. 206.

29. Sadhana, p. 161.



## CHAPTER VIII

### HENRY BERGSON ON RELIGION



*Creative Evolution—Closed Morality—Open  
Morality—Static Religion—Dynamic Religion.*

"Mysticism is singularly uniform in all times and places. The communion of soul with God has found much the same expression whether the mystic is a Neoplatonic philosopher like Plotinus, a Mohammadan Sufi, a Catholic monk or a Quaker. Mysticism, which is the living heart of religion, springs from a deeper level than the differences which divide the churches, the cultural changes which divide the ages of history."

—W. R. Inge—

#### I

Henry Bergson envisions Reality as a perpetually creative process or force and his entire philosophy unfolds with beauty and grace this abiding vision of Reality. Bergson's central thesis is that change alone is real, that reality is the eternal flux of things. The universe is the embodiment of an immanent principle of incessant change which progressively evolves the universe. The universe is eternally in the making. He calls this principle 'elan vital'. The eternal, vital energy, according to him, is ever active and creative and ever evolving new forms and unforeseeable events. This vital impetus or elan vital or God or



reality is manifest in all forms of matter and mind: Therefore, the vital impetus is identical with the fundamental reality underlying all manifestations. Thus God is unceasing action and manifestation. Bergson writes—"God, thus defined, has nothing of the ready-made; He is unceasing life, action, freedom. Creation so conceived, is not a mystery; we experience it in ourselves when we act freely".<sup>1</sup>

The evolution of the world involves a creative process which is constantly producing divergent forms out of one, original and dynamic principle or substratum. In other words, evolution is truly creative; it is neither mechanical evolution nor teleological creation. For, the theory of mechanical evolution and the theory of teleological creation fail to explain the novelty, unity, harmony, unforeseeability of the creative process. They fail to explain the simultaneous presence of discord and harmony, novelty and oldness in the universe. Bergson presupposes one original impulse behind all and he explains discord, novelty and harmony by supposing the spontaneous disruption of the same vital principle. By identifying God with the vital principle Bergson puts God at the beginning of creation. He maintains that creation presupposes a pre-creative existence as nothing can come out of nothing; creation is nothing but reality impregnated with spirit.<sup>2</sup> God is eternally dynamic; He is not static or already perfect; He is finding Himself by incessant self-manifestation through creation; He is unceasing action; He orders the entire flux of change but He is not beyond change, for He is change.

Evolution is not repetition of the same rigmarole; by constant self-manifestation it ushers in continually new forms which are unforeseeable and unpredictable. The

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1. *Creative Evolution*, p. 262.

2. *Creative Mind*, p. 39.



creative process is like a rolling snow-ball which swells as it advances; nothing is lost for the past is preserved in the present and the present swells into the future ceaselessly. Bergson conceives the emergence of all things from one source—so naturally it follows that both matter and consciousness are derived from the one and the same principle. Thus he indirectly advocates a form of monism. The creative evolution has mainly three different forms—the forms of negative torpor, instinct and intelligence. The three tendencies characterise three main paths along which life has evolved. But we should also remember that the paths along which the original life-impetus has divided itself are innumerable. In plants, animal and man it has evolved itself with great success—this is the difference. Evolution is not necessarily always progressive; it may be retrogressive as well though ultimately it is progressive on the whole.

In man the three things are of primary importance; they are instinct, intelligence and intuition. Both instinct and intelligence are the two different forms of the same original life-impetus trying to adjust itself to the environment. Yet the instinct and intelligence are almost inseparable from each other. In animal instinct predominates; in man intelligence holds the whiphand. Bergson says—“Instinct, therefore, is the innate knowledge of a thing,” while intelligence is an improvement upon instinct for man’s self-preservation. It is the instrument of mind just as the eye is the instrument of the body. Intelligence reveals the universe to us; it only partakes of the things that are statically and fragmentarily arranged in space and time.

What is intuition? Bergson says—“.....by intuition I mean instinct that becomes disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object enlarging it indefinite-



ly".<sup>3</sup> The self-conscious instinct is intuition. It is the plunge by soul into the very vital impetus of life to become one with its unbroken and perpetual flow. We have here "the indivisible and therefore substantial continuity of the flow of inner life." Intelligence divides the flowing reality into immobile parts and presents their concepts in abstract, static and fragmentary forms. Whereas for intuition essential is change; it is able to perceive in the duration of growing reality "an uninterrupted continuity of unforeseeable novelty." Intellect regards a thing as cutting which has been taken from the flow of becoming but intuition regards a thing as the unbroken duration of the eternal becoming. Intuition is the direct vision of the flowing reality in one bound; the intuitive plunge into the unbroken current of life makes one free and truly creative and opens the realm of infinite possibility and freedom. By intuition we become aware that life is a free activity in a free universe and that every individual life is one and identical with the cosmic creative life.

## II

This dynamic concept of life and reality is applied by Bergson to the problems of morality and religion. Turning to the study of moral and religious phenomena Bergson first of all enquires into the basis of moral obligation. He maintains that though intelligence plays a prominent part in evolving moral laws and maxims and in supplying arguments in support of man's actions and moral convictions moral obligation does not result from intelligence. For man's action is ultimately determined by instinct and emotion. Intellect simply fortifies and tries to rationalise

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3. *Creative Evolution*, p. 186.



these non-rational forces by inventing concepts and arguments in support of theirs. Thus intellect really subserves these primary forces; so the will is decisively influenced by instinct and emotion and in addition to these habit too plays a big role in influencing the will. Bergson says—“.....social life appears to us as a system of more or less deeply rooted habits”.<sup>4</sup> Habit is almost like instinct and can move a man as blindly as the instinct moves an insect.

The moral obligation which is a feeling of pressure is the result of man's social habits. Nature itself is social by instinct and life is nothing but a form of social organisation which is social in expression. Just as there is relation between cells in an organism there is relation between individuals in a human society.<sup>5</sup> Nature has planned and organised life in the form of society everywhere—in the realms of insects, animals and human beings. In a society individuals must be subservient to the interest and good of the society as a whole for their own self-preservation. In other words, the interest of society is upheld by nature even at the cost of constituent individuals. The law operates not only in human realm but also in the domains of all creatures.

In animal and insect societies the individuals work by instinct to safeguard and preserve the societies even at the risk of their own lives. Here the individuals are not aware of their separate individuality; here nature secures discipline, solidarity, organisation through instinct. In human society each individual is aware of his own separate individuality and is free to choose his course of action and mould his own destiny. So in the kingdom of man nature faces

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4. *The Two Sources Of Morality And Religion*, p. 10.

5. *Ibid*, p. 94.



the menace of disintegration of society, for the growth of human intelligence and feeling of separateness arising out of intelligence tend to break up the social co-hesion and integrity. The awareness that one can choose one's individual course of action regardless of the interest of the society as a whole represents, therefore, a potential threat to nature's aim and work. But fortunately or unfortunately instinct comes forward to stabilise the solidarity of human society. In man instinct is potentially present; it has been only eclipsed by the phenomenal growth of intelligence. Under the influence of instinct the individual feels that for his own interest he should subordinate his will and interest to the will and interest of the society as a whole. Thus in man the instinct of self-preservation is present and under its influence intelligence teaches man that though man is at liberty to pursue his own independent path it will not be ultimately good for him to ignore the interest of society. It teaches man that the preservation of society is necessary for his self-preservation.

Intellect or reason asks man to restrain his selfish motives and evolves for man rules of conduct to harmonise his interest with that of society. In this way the moral codes of conduct come into being. The instinct of self-preservation uses intellect for the preservation of society and out of obligation comes the moral way of life; and obligation is pressure which binds us to ourselves. Bergson writes—"Obligation, which we look upon as a bond between men, first binds us to ourselves".<sup>6</sup> Man feels that his obedience to society gives him strength, unbroken tension of energy, steadiness in effort and the greatest yield for his activity. Bergson writes—".....social solidarity exists

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6. Ibid, p. 15.



only in so far as a social ego is superadded, in each of us to the individual self".<sup>7</sup> And the cultivation of this social ego is the essence of our moral obligation to society we belong. All individuals are born into this social obligation and they are educated to obey the moral codes which have come into being by the above-mentioned process. By the process of constant repetition the habit of obeying these rules of conduct becomes deeply rooted in the nature of man. In this way the interest of society is protected and preserved by social or moral habits and the disruptive urges of intelligence are neutralised by its own maturer teachings.

All moral duties and responsibilities in the final analysis are nothing but the duties of the individuals to society. So also all moral pressures are social pressures and the verdict of conscience is the verdict of the social ego to restrain the individual ego. But the human intelligence does not stop here. In its attempt to stabilise the society more and more it also formulates religious myths and theories, and various notions of a highly moral God to prohibit, punish and prevent all anti-social acts and tendencies. Similarly, these notions evolved by intelligence reward the virtuous, law-abiding persons to encourage loyalty to society and to protect and preserve the social order.

This type of morality is limited to particular societies and Bergson calls this type of social morality the morality of closed or static society. It is the closed morality and it is confined within the bonds of particular nations and communities. Its laws are not universal; they have no universal scope of application. For instance, during the war the social morality clearly exhibits its limited and narrow

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7. Ibid, p. 15.



character of chauvinism. This type of closed morality of a particular nation or society during war makes it moral obligation for persons belonging to it to kill the persons belonging to other nation or society. In other words, in times of war the society demands for its own self-preservation that its members should violate the moral codes which are prevalent in it in dealing with its enemies. Hence this closed morality is neither absolute morality nor applicable to entire humanity irrespective of nations, races and societies.

The closed morality is possible in a closed society. The closed society is a society which simply confines itself to the members of its organisation. Its laws and moral codes are only applicable to its members. The society closes itself up owing to the instinct of self-preservation. Its urges and laws are static and resist the propulsion of dynamic adventure and freedom of the open, untrammelled world. This type of society combines the heritage of nature with the residue of past forms of life. The instinct or impulse of self-preservation or the pressure on individuals by society to protect its interest is the original cause of closed morality which is relative and limited in content. Closed morality verges on the instinct and passivity; it is afraid of the open world of universal application and scope; it tends to maintain the static shape of the whole by a system of habits and customs which are limited to particular communities and societies. It flourishes in a static atmosphere.

### III

Bergson maintains that there is another type of morality which is totally different from the closed type of morality of the static society. There is a big, insuperable gulf between closed morality and open morality. Bergson



says—".....the difference between the two objects is one of kind and not simply one of degree".<sup>8</sup> So it is never possible to go naturally from closed morality to open morality. The former is limited to a particular society or organisation; the latter embraces the entire humanity. The one is exclusive, the other is all-inclusive. Bergson writes—"For between the nation however big, and humanity there lies the whole distance from the finite to the indefinite, from the closed to the open".<sup>9</sup> So it is essential to remember the basis of the basic difference between the two.

The closed morality has in view a closed society; the open morality has in view the entire humanity. The origin of the closed morality is social obligation or pressure—the origin of the open morality is aspiration and universal vision of life. Bergson is of opinion that we can naturally and spontaneously and directly come to love our parents and even our fellow-countrymen. But the love of mankind is indirectly acquired and realised through long training and mental discipline. He says—"We go straight to the former, to the latter we come only by the round about ways; for it is only through God, in God, that religion bids man love mankind".<sup>10</sup>

It is certain that social or closed morality cannot be broadened into absolute or complete morality by mere gradual transition with the progress of ideas and convictions. The dynamic action—the leap into the unknown or the direct plunge into the unbroken stream of life can reveal to us the essence of the complete morality. We become aware of it when the identity of ourselves with

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8. Ibid, p. 32.

9. Ibid, p. 32.

10. Ibid, p. 33.



the whole is established. There have been on earth moral geniuses in all lands and times who have taken a headlong plunge into the stream of life to realise their undying identity with it. They have realised the essential unity of all existence and the universal love for all creation. They have liberated morality from captivity of particular societies and evolved true universal principles of morality, which are of universal application. Bergson says—"In all times there have arisen exceptional men incarnating this morality.... It is to them that men have always turned for that complete morality which we had best called absolute morality".<sup>11</sup>

The origin of complete morality is not social obligation or pressure by the instinct of self-preservation. It springs from aspiration—from the selfless attraction and love of entire mankind. Hence it has no compelling force of compulsion or pressure or obligation arising out of self-interest; it has a tremendous appeal of its own, which is eternal and universal. It has no social instinct but the universal benefit in view. It is the unconditional acceptance of law that comprises the entire humanity; in other words, complete morality is human and not merely social; it is dynamic and not static; it is unbound and not closed.

The origin of complete morality is not to be found in all persons for it incarnates itself in a privileged few. The person endowed with it becomes living example of it and others spontaneously follow him. From him issue forth loyalty, sacrifice, the spirit of renunciation, charity and the love of mankind. Complete morality is dynamic; it is a movement and creative spirit of free and unbound dimension, which is in perfect accord with the creative process of evolution. Bergson says that open morality "is a forward

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11. Ibid, p. 34.



thrust; a demand for movement; it is the very essence of mobility".<sup>12</sup> The opening soul loses itself in it in sheer joy of freedom; ready-made laws of closed morality vanish away and true spiritual morality reveals itself. This morality reveals itself. This morality of aspiration is progressive; it breaks down natural resistance and raises humanity to a new destiny for its has tremendous attraction for mankind. Through appeal, aspiration and imitation the complete morality spreads among mankind. It has emotional appeal and the immeasurable love to transform men and raise all to a great height of profound fulfilment and creativity.

A saint symbolising this morality is sufficient to fill with respect and admiration for him all people. He appeals to our highest sentiments and charms us into a discipleship and we feel that joy of freedom in imitating his rare life and unique conduct. And if there are no such exceptional men in society it would remain closed for ever. For such men break the bondage of the closed society and lead mankind towards the freedom of the open universe. Closed morality is the contribution of nature for self-preservation; the open morality is the contribution of rare and specially creative geniuses of the ages; it is symbolical of the creative endeavour of exceptional persons. In the final analysis, open morality is the result of the creative and evolutionary progress of life as a whole. The rare individuals represent the focal points of great movement of the eternal life. So in one sense both the types of morality are the product of the biological endeavour. Thus Bergson gives strong emphasis on the biological aspect of life; he remarks—'Let us say in conclusion that all

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12. *Ibid*, p. 58.



morality, be it pressure (closed morality) or aspiration (open morality) is in essence biological".<sup>13</sup>

In the case of saints of the open morality intellect subserves the intuition and emotion just as it subserves the social instinct in the case of natural man of closed morality of the closed society. In this way philosophy comes to support and uphold the open morality by demonstrating the brotherhood of man through the Fatherhood of God and the basic unity of human nature with life. But this is possible only because intellect has been illuminated and enlightened by the saint's or mystic's intuition of underlying unity and universal love for all mankind. Intellect unedified by intuition can at the best produce a philosophy which only makes for stability of the static morality of the closed society.

#### IV

Bergson holds that corresponding to two kinds of morality there are two types of religion—static and dynamic. They spring from the same sources whence both types of morality emerge, namely pressure and aspiration. There is naturally a close connection between closed morality and static religion and they both flourish in a closed society. Bergson writes—"The closed society is that whose members hold together, caring nothing for the rest of humanity, on the alert for attack or defence, bound in fact, to a perpetual readiness for battle".<sup>14</sup> Such is the human society fresh from the womb of nature. Nature has ordained that the human beings should live in society. A constant force operates and ensures the cohesion of the community by bending all individual wills to the common end.

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13. Ibid, p. 101.

14. Ibid, p. 266.



This force is the force of moral obligation of closed society. The closed society fortified by the closed morality brings into play the static religion to safeguard its interests and to ensure self-preservation. Nature has endowed man with intelligence which often acts against the will and urge of nature or society. We have already seen that intelligence has a disruptive tendency—an urge to break away from the binding social unity which holds together all individuals through the instinct of self-preservation. Free and roving intelligence is, therefore, a threat to the existence of closed society because of its “dissolving action” as Bergson calls it. It is to be noted, however, that intelligence is not always hostile to or active for the disintegration of society. Its disintegrating force is present in most cases as potential power.

But nature successfully resists and overcomes the dissolving actions and urges of the intelligence; it brings into play first of all the forces of closed morality and then for double protection it ushers in the forces of static religion. Thus closed morality and static religion are two major instruments in the hands of nature to fight back the disintegrating forces of intelligence. The essential function of static religion is myth-making which successfully resists the incursions of intelligence, preserves and protects the interests of the closed society and communicates to its members that confidence which is indispensable. Bergson writes—“This religion, which we have called static, and this obligation, which is tantamount to a pressure, are the very substance of closed society”.<sup>15</sup>

Static religion may be designated as natural religion. Intelligence can be harmful to the interest of a closed society

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15. Ibid, pp. 266-267.



in several ways. Firstly, it shows man the possibility of breaking away from the social interest and suggests to him that for self-interest he may ignore the interest of society as a whole. Thus there is every possibility that man by intelligence may be roused in thought to turn to himself for leading a pleasant but selfish (hence anti-social) life. Bergson says that it is quite true that intelligence would counsel egoism first. For it is in keeping with the separative tendency of the individual. It is also true that man should naturally rush towards that direction when roused by intelligence. But nature is ever on the watch; it is up in arms the moment it notices the operation of the dissolving process of the intelligence. Another difficulty of nature in the sphere of human beings is that instinct is generally overshadowed by the growth of intelligence. In other words, in human realm instinct is not strong enough to deter the forces of disruption as it does in the domain of animals and insects. So instinct here urged by nature projects into existence an illusory force in the form of static religion to prevent intelligence from leading man away from the binding influence of society. Bergson writes—"Looked at from the first point of view, religion is then a defensive reaction of nature against the dissolvent power of intelligence".<sup>16</sup>

Secondly, intelligence assigns to man the capacity of anticipation. It enables man to anticipate his future and the result is that man feels uncertain about the success of his efforts and struggles. He is thus depressed by fear of death, by the fear of the possibility of failure. An animal is not aware of death or of the possibility of failure; hence it is undeterred and undepressed by the thought of

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16. Ibid, p. 122.



depression, fear, failure and death. It freely unfolds the plan and will of nature; nature here works without interference. But man is depressed by the possibility of failure and by the fear of death. And this realisation is liable to make man apathetic and indifferent to social enterprise and impair his effort for social good and progress. Therefore, just as selfishness tends to thwart social integrity the anxiety too tends to hamper individual action and ultimately the social interest and enterprises. It breeds pessimism, weakness, passivity which are obstacles in the way of nature's will and aim, action and aspiration. Thus this factor engendered by intelligence acts against the intension of nature.

Nature has ordained that instinct should function in the domain of animals and insects and intelligence in the domain of man. Now to counteract the undesirable action of its own tool nature evolves ways and means. Intelligence is unceasingly made by nature to undo the wrong done by it by inventing the myths of religion to preserve the natural order—social solidarity and individual security in the midst of society. Static religion is thus born of the myth-making function of the intelligence or mind. This function is rather instinctive in the sense that it operates by the instinctive urge of nature. Phantasies and illusory images are created and projected into being and nature which has made man intelligent also makes him superstitious to countervail the menace of intelligence. Phantasies are the beneficial defensive mechanism of nature to secure the protection of its creatures. Similarly, mythological beliefs in supernatural phenomena, spirits and gods and goddesses come into being in similar way for the preservation of the social order by restraining the selfish, antisocial urges and forces of the intelligent individuals.



Therefore, the function of static religion is directly concerned with social preservation. The objects of awe and wonder, adoration and worship are gradually clothed with human personality and qualities and they are presented as the saving guardians of the city or society or nation. They are projected into being to prohibit, prevent and punish all violations of the codes of closed morality and static religion of the closed society.

We have remarked earlier that the greatest deterrant to man's propulsive urge for progress and development is the fear of death. Man is constantly aware of his mortality and this realisation dogs man perpetually, depresses him and slows down in him the rapid tempo of life, which is essential for nature's work and mission. Other creatures belonging to the lower order of existence are unaware of the mortality; hence propulsive movement is unchecked and they carry on with nature's work till they succumb to death. In man the idea of death hampers the will of nature and nature cannot tolerate this interference which is caused by intelligence. It, therefore, comes forward with the idea of continuation of life after death to oppose and nullify the idea of mortality. Nature compels intelligence to conceive the idea of the immortality of the soul. In this way the hampering influence of the idea of the inevitability of death is neutralised by the conception of the inevitability of immortality. And this idea or conviction rouses in man the hope and sense of confidence which are essential conditions of all human work and aspiration. Bergson writes—"Looked at from this second standpoint, religion is a defensive reaction of nature against the representation by intelligence, of the inevitability of death".<sup>17</sup>

Thirdly, another source of hindering force is the

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17. Ibid, p. 131.



knowledge that man's efforts are liable to be thwarted by unfavourable circumstances which are beyond human control. But in man the vital impetus is working; it brooks no delay and admits of no obstacle. It tends to ignore the accidental and the unforeseen factors of life. So when failure opposes its forward movement it becomes necessary for intelligence to have cognizance of this anticipation. Thus a representation arises of favourable powers over-riding the natural course of events or occupying the place of natural phenomena to ensure man's success in his endeavours. So between man's work for a destined end and the end nature inserts "a supra-mechanical guarantee of success." Thus man is made to believe that a higher power is working for him, and that he can now work with confidence and hope. The feeling of depression, in this way, gives rise to the concepts of both harmful and benevolent powers. And man is gradually persuaded by his own instinctive desire for success to imagine that he can overcome the obstacles by worshipping and asking help of benevolent powers. And due to the same reason these forces are conceived as stronger than the forces of evil; from this concept comes into existence the idea of the all-powerful God and the need of His worship. The concept of one all-powerful God is the culmination of the process of the idea of baneful and benevolent powers or spirits. Bergson observes that the vital impetus is in man and it is ever-optimistic; so also the religion which originates from it. He thinks that all religions arising from this vital impetus can be defined as the "defensive reaction of nature against the representation, by intelligence, of a depressing margin of the unexpected between the initiative taken and the effect desired".<sup>18</sup>

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18. Ibid, p. 140.



After studying the diverse phenomena of comparative religion Bergson comes to the conclusion that in the light of psychological and biological method all historical religions are ultimately based on mythological beliefs which nature projects on human mind to counteract the dangers of tendencies and urges stemming from separative powers of intelligence. In this way the balance of human society is maintained; these religions of nature are all static religions. The static religion, Bergson observes, is infra-rational because it springs from the pressure of instinct for self-preservation.<sup>19</sup> It is called static religion because it ensures social solidarity and stability and binds man to his closed society. This religion corresponds to closed society and it based on narrow provincial outlook. Its inherent narrowness is clearly indicated when one nation asks its people to attack and kill the people of another nation in the name of its God and religion. Static religion is bound to be chauvinistic in temper and character.

#### V.

The vital impetus or *elan vital* which is the reality and symbolical of the entire advancement of creative evolution in this way gets confined within a closed society based on closed morality and static religion. Thus the vital impetus working through nature by its urge to stabilise human society for the materialisation of its aim gets itself captivated by the static forces of the closed society it ushers in. It becomes the prisoner of its own forces. Yet the supreme aim of the creative evolution or vital impetus is dynamic movement and freedom of the open world. Therefore, it is imperative for the vital impetus to break through the

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19. *Ibid*, p. 269.



barrier of the closed society, morality and static religion to fulfil the ultimate purpose of the creative process. And the vital impetus which has temporarily ended its career in closed society is destined to be found out and recaptured "not by the species but by some privileged individual." Bergson writes—"This impetus is thus carried forward through the medium of certain men, each of whom thereby constitutes a species composed of a single individual".<sup>20</sup>

Out of the intuitive vision of a few privileged individuals the dynamic religion comes into existence when the individuals become fully conscious of the vital impetus of life through intuition which surrounds their intelligence. They become truly intuitive and are initiated into the true mystic way of life and realisation. The mystic life which results from the free, full and intensive play of intuition is the perennial source of dynamic religion. Bergson writes—"The dynamic religion which thus springs into being is the very opposite of the static religion born of the myth-making function, in the same way as the open society is the opposite of the closed society".<sup>21</sup> In this way the world transforming dynamic religion is born by the mystic's intuition and his identity with the *elan vital* of life. Hence this religion is supra-rational as it is beyond the confines of the intellect or human reason. It releases the vital energy from the serfdom of the closed world. It places it again on the secure foundations of its essence and being.

Only the religious geniuses of the highest order, which penetrate beyond the confines of the closed society and intellectual cogitations and take a headlong plunge into the dynamic source of all existence—the *elan vital*, can become the manifestation and centre of the dynamic religion. As

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20. *Ibid*, p. 268.

21. *Ibid*, p. 268.



the exceptional mind grows and develops it becomes critical and sceptical of the validity of myths and notions of traditional religion. The loss of faith makes the man restless and full of anxiety. Thus the mind of the highest order dissatisfied by the notions of the static religion in its intense desire to get rid of the false notions and gain confidence in life turns desperately towards a new source of inspiration and strength. It realises once and for all that reason and intelligence are ineffective to grapple with the deeper mysteries of life. The mind then by refusing to adhere to intellect only becomes aware of the fictitious nature of intellect's projections which uphold the static religion. This is like getting rid of a bad dream, says Bergson. Then all fears and anxieties, all imaginary comforts and ideas, all spirits and gods and goddesses springing from static religion vanish away; and finally the static religion itself vanishes away from the mind of the exceptional personality or the mystic. Such rare realisation is possible only to the individuals of great calibre and ability and penetrating insight. They are strong and noble enough to make sustained effort to thrust back intelligence and to take an intuitive plunge into the fundamental current of life eternal which is also supreme Reality or God.

There is a fringe of intuition surrounding the intelligence of every person. A true mystic captures this intuitive force and transforms this potentially present and generally undefined and evanescent thing into a tremendous reality and power of action and illumination. The human intelligence preserves a halo of intuition. In ordinary man it remains disinterested, vague, undefined and undeveloped. In a personality of a mystic it is developed and intensified, roused and brought into a powerful focus. In other words, it is up and doing in the personality of a



mystic, and it makes the mystic aware of the continuity of the inner life—of the presence of reality and life surrounding the ordinary life. This awareness leads to the birth of dynamic religion which is closely related to the open morality of the open world. The intuitive vision leads the mystic to the roots of human existence and thus to the very principle of life in general.<sup>22</sup>

The mystic's entire being is pervaded by a reality immeasurably mightier than his being just as iron is pervaded by the fire that makes it glow and shine. The mystic's soul becomes attached to the dynamic current of life which is the vehicle of higher power's manifestation and which exhibits creative joy and universal love for all existence. A true mystic gives his entire life to society which is neither closed nor limited to any particular community or race or religion. A true mystic embraces the whole of humanity in love and fellow-feeling.

Yet just as open morality takes shape only by borrowing the form and language of the closed morality, the dynamic religion too is propagated only through the images and symbols of static religion. But we must remember that they only borrow the external forms and symbols and the contents of the open morality and dynamic religion are radically different from the contents of closed and limited morality and static religion. And just as we cannot come to open morality by the gradual widening of the closed morality—the dynamic religion cannot be attained by the enlargement of and improvement on the static religion. For the difference between them is not of degree but of kind. Bergson says—"The mistake is to believe that it is possible to pass, by a mere process of enlargement or

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 250.



improvement from the static to the dynamic".<sup>23</sup> The confusion is due to the fact that in both kinds of religion similar symbols and images are used. So in this connection it is pertinent and important to remember the basic difference between the two.

The mystic is often and on compelled to use the language of the static religion to express intuitively realised inexpressible things of the spiritual world. Often we have the blending of static and dynamic religions in almost all lands. For example, the concept of the universal God in many static religions reveals this blending, the concept of one universal God being the fundamental concept of the dynamic religion. But the mystic brings into perfect focus the essential conditions of the dynamic religion in his life, conduct and realisation. The vital life is universal in nature and content and as the mystic realises the life-impetus his vision of God becomes universal. In this way the grand concept of one omnipresent and omnipotent God loving all creatures takes place. The dynamic religion finds fulfilment and fruition in true mysticism. Bergson speaks of two types of mysticism—incomplete mysticism and complete mysticism.

The incomplete mysticism consists of the contemplation and ecstasy, vision and rapture which the realisation of eternal life produces. It consists in the meditation on ultimate reality or God; it means merely the suspension of the critical functions of the intelligence through intense meditation or hypnosis of Yoga or some other mystic means. A mystic of this school becomes absorbed in the ultimate reality and he remains perfectly static because in this state the will to action remains static or passive. The mystic of

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23. Ibid, p. 269.



this school likes to remain absorbed in the vision of God—in the serene calmness of contemplation of the divine. He loves to brood over the unifying and exultant illumination of knowledge supreme; he does not want to come down to the realm of action and he holds unto the famous dictum of Plotinus: action is a weakening of contemplation. Therefore, the mystic of this type goes as far as ecstasy which is a state in which “the soul feels itself, or thinks it feels itself, in the presence of God”.<sup>24</sup> His entire being is then illuminated with God’s spiritual light. But he does not reach the point “where, as contemplation is engulfed in action, the human will becomes one with the divine will”.<sup>25</sup> The incomplete mystic is static and not dynamic; he is the passive man of contemplation of the divine.

The complete mysticism is the mysticism which combines contemplation with action, realisation with fruition, feeling with dynamic expression of the will of the divine in space and time. Defining what he considers to be true and complete mysticism Bergson writes—“In our eyes, the ultimate end of mysticism is the establishment of a contact, consequently of a partial coincidence, with the creative effort which life itself manifests. This effort is of God, if it is not God Himself”.<sup>26</sup> We have already seen that Bergson equates God with unceasing creation or vital impetus of perennial flow. So true mysticism is possible when man unites himself with the creative urge of life itself, when he becomes the conscious partaker of the divine will and action, when he becomes the willing vehicle of the divine mission on earth. In other words, the full or partial identification of individual life with the life eternal

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24. Ibid, p. 221.

25. Ibid, p. 221.

26. Ibid, p. 220.



and universal is complete mysticism. A true or complete mystic becomes the willing instrument of the divine will or *elan vital* or God—the medium through which the divine will operates to transform the world and humanity. Bergson says—“The great mystic is to be conceived as one individual being, capable of transcending the limitations imposed on the species by its material nature, thus continuing and extending the divine action”.<sup>27</sup>

The complete mysticism is the materialisation of the divine urge and will in space and time. A great mystic is capable of going beyond the recalcitrant forces of matter, which oppose and resist the creative progress of the *elan vital*. The passive mysticism is incomplete because the will here is left out of the union of soul with God. Bergson says—“But though the soul becomes in thought and feeling absorbed in God, something of it remains outside, that something is the will”.<sup>28</sup> In complete mysticism the will in the language of Bergson finds its way back to God. Here the divine will and the individual will unite to usher in the great creative era. In other words, the dynamic religion in action is the complete mysticism. The great mystic yearns to be the instrument of God; he throws off anything that is not pure enough to be turned to use by God. Bergson says—“Now it is God who is acting through the soul, in the soul; the union is total, therefore final”.<sup>29</sup> Now the soul has boundless impetus and superabundance of life and it now hurls itself into vast life-giving enterprises to uplift humanity and change the face of the world for the better.

The great mystic becomes the centre of the universal love and truth flows into his soul from its fountainhead like

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27. Ibid, pp. 220-221.

28. Ibid, pp. 230-231.

29. Ibid, p. 232.



an active force. And he will spread the truth and love not in empty words but through dynamic actions and living examples. Bergson says—"For the love which consumes him is no longer simply the love of man for God, it is the love of God for all men. Through God, in the strength of God, he loves all mankind with a divine love".<sup>30</sup>

As usual Bergson gives strong emphasis on the dynamic aspect of mysticism. The complete mysticism is the expression of an entirely new effort. A mystic of this type bursts the dam of static laws and obligations. He is "swept back into the vast current of life" and is endowed with "an extraordinary energy, with daring power of conception and realisation." He has also the same visions, raptures, ecstasy which the presence and realisation of God usher in. But above all his mysticism finds completion not in static contemplation but in superabundance of activity devoted to bring about a moral and material transformation of humanity.

The aim of mysticism of dynamic religion is the great moral transformation. God acts through the mystic souls to materialise the divine mission on earth. The true mystic by his contact with the original flow of life-impetus receives tremendous and perennial energy which he hurls into vast enterprises and transmits to his fellow-beings. He thus willingly and consciously participates in God's creative work and love of all. Bergson observes that through such mystics, through their actions, presence and influence the humanity can be transformed from the natural state to the spiritual or divine state. And no material obstacle can stand in the way of a great mystic because his energy flows from the spring which is the very source of

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30. Ibid, p. 233.



Life Eternal. Bergson writes—"Let a mystic genius but appear he will draw after him a humanity already vastly grown in body, and whose soul he has transformed".<sup>31</sup> He maintains that humanity can change for the better—if only it wants the change because true things never get done of themselves.

Bergson defends mysticism in various ways. He points out the fundamental and universally common factors of it; mystics of different times and climes use the same symbols and precepts, figures and means. They see the same visions, feel the same ecstasies and delight of the other world. This is indeed a great proof of the validity of mysticism. Secondly, experience is the only source of knowledge; hence if a mystic experiences such mystical things we have no right to call in question the truth of his experience because we have no such experience. Yet such realisation is possible for every one of us provided we reach that supreme height of illumination. Thirdly, the mystic's narration of his strange experiences may be provisionally accepted since verification is potentially feasible in this matter. Bergson feels that when experience is the only source of knowledge we must have scientific researches in this realm of spirit and mysticism which results from experience directly. The mystics of all lands and ages "join hands across the centuries" and "unite into a divine unity which they bid us enter."

Bergson is very optimistic in his approach to the question of future salvation of mankind. For he does not believe in the fatality of history or predeterminism. He thinks that every person is totally free to mould his or her

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31. Ibid, p. 311.



destiny and consequently the universe at large. The vital impetus or the creative energy which is inherent in every life is essentially free. Man through dynamic religion or complete mysticism by identifying his life with that basic life can also be free if he is bold and steadfast enough to transform himself. The complete mystic enjoys the complete freedom of creative realisation. So if man is aware of the possibility of freedom he can guide the course of his life and destiny eventually.

Bergson thinks that the aim of humanity is not to remain in natural state but to gain a divine goal. Divinity is the birthright of man and he must attain it. For the universe is the machine of making God out of man. The creative process is a God-making process. Therefore, it is imperative for man to lift himself from the domain of nature to the sphere of true spirituality. And in order to do that he must exert himself to the utmost by constant exercise of will-force and endeavour. And he should realise once and for all that the future is in his own hands. Bergson is definite on this vital point. He remarks that things do not get done of themselves; they must be done by the effort of man. He closes his great work with these prophetic words—"Mankind lies groaning, half-crushed beneath the weight of its own progress. Men do not sufficiently realise that their future is in their own hands. Theirs is the task of determining first of all whether they want to go on living or not. Theirs is the responsibility, then, for deciding if they want merely to live, or intent to make just the extra effort required for fulfilling, even on their refractory planet, the essential function of the universe which is a machine for the making of God".<sup>32</sup>

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32. Ibid, p. 317.



## CHAPTER IX

### A. N. WHITEHEAD ON RELIGION



*Religion And Science—Causes Of The Decline  
Of Religion In Europe—Essence Of Religion  
God—Requisites For Progress.*

"God is the whole universe engaged in process towards the emergence of this new quality, and religion is the sentiment in us that we are drawn towards Him, and caught in the movement of the world to a higher level of existence."

—Samuel Alexander—

#### I

A. N. Whitehead observes that the nature of exact relation between religion and science would be of utmost importance for the welfare of the future world. Yet the task seems to be very difficult because we have no clear idea of what we exactly mean either by the term 'science' or by the term 'religion'. In spite of the difficulty it is imperative for us to understand the nature of connection that exists between science and religion so that we may be able to draw certain valuable conclusions definitely. The conclusions would provide the key to the whole confusing situation which today confronts the world and humanity.

When we think of religion and science the idea of the conflict between them naturally occurs in our mind. The



idea of such conflict between them has become natural to our way of thinking. Apparently during the last half a century the findings of science and the beliefs of religion have come into a position of open disagreement. It seems now that either we should give up the clear teachings of science or the clear teachings of religion. There seems to be no other way and many a controversialist has insisted upon this conclusion. Today a truly religious person is tormented by his sensitivity for religion on the one hand, and by the zeal for the scientific truth on the other. This position, Whitehead holds, should command our deepest sympathy and consideration. The gravity of the situation can never be over-estimated because we all know what religion and science are for humanity. He says—"We have here the two strongest general forces which influence men, and they seem to be set one against the other—the force of our religious institutions, and the force of our impulse to accurate observation and logical deduction".<sup>1</sup>

When we deal with the relation between science and religion we immediately discover two great significant facts: "there has always been a conflict between religion and science; both religion and science have always been in a state of continual development".<sup>2</sup> That is, both of them have been in conflict and they are always on the march towards progress. We must bear in mind these two important facts when we consider the entire problem of science and religion. Whitehead gives examples from the events of Christian religion to illustrate that many early and medieval beliefs of Christianity were proved to be fallacious and Christianity adjusted itself to the change. Repudiation of such beliefs and consequent adjustments

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1. Science And The Modern World, p. 180.

2. Ibid, p. 181.



were the results of advancing scientific discoveries and inventions. He also points out that our idea would be in a wrong perspective if we think that such occurrences were confined to the contradiction between religion and science and science was always right and religion was always wrong.

Religion and religious theology exhibit the same criterion of gradual development "arising from all aspect of conflict between its own ideas." Thus conflict of ideas belonging to religion has also taken place and we must bear in mind this important fact which is often forgotten in the stress of conflict and controversy. Often old beliefs and doctrines of early theology were refuted by the theologians of the later age. Similarly, in the realm of science changes and developments, readjustments of thoughts and ideas, theories and data have been more rapid and extensive. For instance, a modern scientists cannot subscribe with qualification to all Galileo's or Newton's beliefs or "to all his own scientific beliefs of ten years ago."

Therefore, it is certain that in both the regions of thought additions, distinctions and modifications have taken place. Today we come to realise that any assertion about any fact or thing is subject to limitation or future expansion of meaning. There is no static, unchangeable fact or truth and we are always conscious that which appears to be absolutely true today may not be so to-morrow. Logicians tell us that either a proposition is true or false and there is no middle term. But in practice we find that a proposition expresses an important truth, but "that it is subject to limitations and qualifications which at present remain undiscovered".<sup>3</sup>

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3. Ibid, p. 182.



Whitehead maintains that we should apply the above principle to the problem of conflict between religion and science. He says—"We would believe nothing in either sphere of thought which does not appear to us to be certified by solid reasons based upon the critical research either of ourselves or of competent authorities".<sup>4</sup> But this precaution is not enough because the clash between the two may take place on points of detail where they overlap. And due to this inevitable clash we should not give up hastily the doctrines pertaining to both in support of which we have solid evidence and sufficient justification. We must have the proper sense of perspective of the history of thought. The most sensible attitude under these circumstances would be one of unbaissed patience. In other words, we should wait and refrain from mutual anathemas. Yet one should not wait in passive despair. For the minor clashes are a sure sign of the progress of thought; it shows that there are wider truths and finer perspective "within which a reconciliation of a deeper religion and a more subtle science will be found".<sup>5</sup>

In one sense, Whitehead observes, the conflict between them is a minor affair which has been unduly exaggerated. A logical contradiction tends simply to point out the necessity of some minor adjustment on both sides. We should also remember in this connection the widely different aspects of facts and events which are dealt with by science and religion. He says—"Science is concerned with the general conditions which are observed to regulate physical phenomena; whereas religion is wholly wrapped up in the contemplation of moral and aesthetic values".<sup>6</sup> On the one

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4. Ibid, p. 183.

5. Ibid, p. 184.

6. Ibid, p. 184.



side, there are the physical laws, and on the other, the recollection of the beauty of holiness. That is, "what one side sees, the other side misses; and vice versa." The birth of a saint from religious view-point is of great significance in the history of the world. From scientific view-point it is merely an example of the operation of the principles of "physiological chemistry, and of dynamics of nervous action". Hence discrepancies are bound to take place when both deal with so vastly different aspects of thought and reality. So Whitehead concludes that there is no cause of alarm because conflict characterises the relation of science and religion. Yet one should not acquiesce in discrepancy for it would be the end of candour and moral honesty. Moreover, in this intellectual age the goal is the attainment of harmony of truth and its realisation. Intellect must pursue every tangle of thought to its final solution—otherwise we will not have either true religion or true science. The conflict is good but it is not final or absolute; and man's ultimate welfare would suffer if conflict forever continues. Man's well-being makes the relation of science and religion pertinent and necessary and we should do well to remember this patent fact.

In what temper are we going to face this vital issue? We have already seen that the clash of doctrines is not a fatal disaster—rather it is an opportunity for the advancement of knowledge and unity of science and religion. Whitehead illustrates this fact from the events of the history of scientific inventions and discoveries. Often discrepancy between two scientific facts has led to the discovery of a new and more harmonious fact and wider knowledge. Hence, he maintains that in the evolution of real knowledge the contradiction "makes the first step in progress towards a victory." This is a great reason for the need of utmost



toleration of diverse views, truths, and facts. When this fact is forgotten or by-passed we fail to attain the goal of our knowledge and intellectual aspiration. We must have the unwavering determination to receive the entire evidence into account if we are to arrive at the real knowledge of any subject.

Whitehead comes to the following conclusions which should determine our attitude towards the whole problem of relation of science and religion.

1. There is conflict between science and religion; the conflict is natural and makes for progress, though harmony of science and religion is the ultimate end.

2. Both religion and science are in a state of continual development.

3. Both science and religion deal with widely different aspects of truth and knowledge and reality; hence we must have the proper perspective of both and deal with them accordingly.

4. Unbiased patience and tolerance and honest intellectual pursuit to come to the harmony of facts and truths regarding science and religion should temper and guide our whole attitude towards both. Solid evidence alone will show the way.

5. A reconciliation of a deeper religion and a more subtle science is the aim of this age.

6. Truths, facts, beliefs, ideas constantly undergo change, modifications and transformations. Action is the dominant note of our life and intellectual adventure. The ideas we inherit are either fading into meaningless formulae or gaining power by the new light thrown on them. Whitehead writes—"You may preserve the life in a flux of form, or preserve the form amid an ebb of life. But



you cannot permanently enclose the same life in the same mould".<sup>7</sup> We should remember this fact.

## II

Whitehead points out that the religion in Europe is on the whole on the decline though there have been minor revivals and reactions in favour of it. There has been through many generations a gradual decay of religious influence in Europe. Religion seems to have lost its old vitality and transforming ability. He writes—"Religion is tending to degenerate into a decent formulae wherewith to embellish a comfortable life".<sup>8</sup> He observes that there are many causes for the decline of religion in Europe. He suggests two of the causes.

Firstly, the religion has been on a weak defensive for over two centuries. This period has been one of great intellectual progress in almost all branches of knowledge; new thoughts, ideas, discoveries and inventions have been on the forefront. But each new thought has found the religious thinkers unprepared; again and again they have been forced to recant their much-vaunted doctrines, beliefs and ideas. Whitehead says—"Something, which has been proclaimed to be vital, has finally, after struggle, distress, anathema, been modified and otherwise interpreted".<sup>9</sup> And the result of the continual and undignified retreat during such a long period of time has almost entirely deprived the religious thinkers of their intellectual authority and initiative.

On the other hand, in the realm of science every defeat of old precept or theory has been symbolical of the great

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7. Ibid, p. 187.

8. Ibid, p. 187.

9. Ibid, p. 188.



victory of science and scientific research. That is, repudiation of old belief in the realm of religion has been the defeat of religion; whereas the repudiation of old belief or theory in the realm of science has been proclaimed as the victory of science. Whitehead says—"We do not go about saying that there is another defeat of science, because its old ideas have been abandoned. We know that another step of scientific insight has been gained".<sup>10</sup> Thus science turns defeat into victory; every new discovery or invention which nullifies or modifies any old theory or idea is considered as a step towards the fuller knowledge. Whereas the dogmatic and irrevocable stand of the religious thinkers in the face of repeated defeats does great disservice to the cause of religion.

In this vital issue Whitehead comes to the very important conclusion: religion will not regain its old power until it can face change in the same spirit as does science.<sup>11</sup> Change or modification will not involve the change or annihilation of the basic principles of religion. The defeat of religion is mostly confined to the domain of the non-essentials of religion, which deal with non-spiritual matters pertaining to religious exercises and allied affairs. The principles of religion are eternal but their expressions are in the need of continual development and modifications in the light of changing needs and circumstances and revelations. So the essential principles are not in danger of annihilation if religion assumes the spirit of science as regards change or modification. Whitehead holds that this evolution of religion will mainly mean the liberation of its own essential ideas "from the adventitious notions which have crept into it by reason of the expression of its own

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10. Ibid, p. 168.

11. Ibid, p. 188.



ideas in terms of the imaginative picture of the world entertained in previous ages".<sup>12</sup>

Hence this temper of religion will release religion from the bonds of imperfect science and throw into bold relief its own genuine ideas and message. Whitehead points out that the advancement of science does not mean that religious beliefs are totally false. It, at the best, calls for some sort of modification of these beliefs in the light of new knowledge, need and trend. And if religion is truly a sound expression of truth eternal this modification "will only exhibit more adequately the exact point which is of importance." And this modification will take place mainly where religion has contact with physical and allied facts and figures. The essential thing in this matter is the temper of science; religion and religious thinkers should adopt this temper and this spirit of science and deal with matters of religion according to this temper and this spirit. Then all will be well—this is the central message of Whitehead. It is quite proper that secular and spiritual aspect of religion would be constantly modified and developed as scientific knowledge advances and the spiritual ideas of religion will receive a complete reorientation of outlook and temper. Whitehead says—"In this way, the exact relevance of these facts for religious thought will grow more and more clear".<sup>13</sup> In this way the progress of science can help the codification of religious thought to the great advantage of religion.

Therefore, the religious thinkers should not take either offensive or defensive attitude towards science. For this position breeds party spirit and exhibits an ultimate lack of faith and confidence. Those who assume such attitude

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12. Ibid, p. 188.

13. Ibid, p. 188.

dare not modify their position because they shirk the task of liberating their spiritual message "from the associations of a particular imagery." Science, Whitehead says, has done great service to spirituality of religion by destroying these medieval fancies. He comes to the following conclusions regarding religion and science.

1. ".....religion is the expression of one type of fundamental experience....."

2. ".....religious thought develops into an increasing accuracy of expression, disengaged from adventitious imagery....."

3. ".....the interaction between religion and science is one great factor in promoting this development".<sup>14</sup>

The second reason for the modern feeling of disinterest in religion involves the ultimate question about the exact nature of religion. We have to realise what we exactly mean by religion. The churches in their answers to this question have put forward aspects of religion which are expressed "in terms either suited to emotional reactions of bygone times or directed to excite modern emotional interest of non-religious character".<sup>15</sup> In other words, the religious appeal firstly is directed to rouse instinctive fear of the wrath of a terrible God behind the unknown forces of nature. This appeal in modern age of enlightenment has lost its power and effectiveness. The moderns are critical today and trained in the critical analysis of causes and effects. When religion presents God as the vindictive power the critical modern man reacts adversely to religion. This attitude of religion is harmful because it is at variance with the psychological trends of modern civilisation. Today modern man is fortified by his knowledge of the

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14. Ibid, n. 190.

15. Ibid, p. 190.



working of phenomena and so he is not inclined towards God Who is a tyrant or Who punishes arbitrarily. This change of psychology owing to the advancement of science has weakened the power of old expression or method of religion.

Secondly, non-religious motive which has entered into modern religious thought does great disservice to the religion and tends to render ineffective the hold of true religion. For it points towards the subtle degradation of religious ideas. Whitehead says—"Religion has been presented as valuable for the ordering of life. Its claims have been rested upon its function as a sanction to right conduct".<sup>16</sup> Religion has been equated with right conduct and right conduct with utilitarian ends. Religion has been made a function which ensures benefit and pleasing social relations. Thus it has degenerated into a mere sanction of rules and codes of conduct. This is a sheer distortion of religion to make it alluring to all. Whitehead declares that conduct is the byproduct of religion and it is not its main characteristic or essence. He writes—"Every religious teacher has revolted against the presentation of religion as a mere sanction of rules of conduct".<sup>17</sup> When religion solely insists upon the rules of conduct it positively marks the decline of religion. Religion can never be equated with mundane utility or secular comfort.

### III

Whitehead proposes to show what is the exact nature of true religion. He writes in his own inimitable poetic language—"Religion is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind and within the passing flux of imme-

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16. Ibid, p. 191.

17. Ibid, p. 191.

mediate things; something which is real, and yet waiting to be realised; something which is a remote possibility, and yet the greatest of present facts; something that gives meaning to all that passes, and yet eludes apprehension; something whose possession is the final good, and yet is beyond all reach; something which is the ultimate ideal, and the hopeless quest".<sup>18</sup>

It is rather difficult to understand clearly what he means but we can have a fairly good idea of the central facts of his position. He means, firstly, that religion is the permanent something which is immanent and transcendent reality in the midst of eternal flux. It has a permanent entity or value against the background of evanescent character of events of the world. Secondly, religion is potentially real; its reality depends upon its factual realisation by the true aspirants. It is real in the sense that it is being progressively realised. Thirdly, it is a fact projected into the future as a possibility. It is an everlasting ideal which can only be realised in course of eternal time; it is an ideal capable of exercising tremendous influence on mankind. Fourthly, it gives meaning and value and significance to the existence as a whole—to our life and destiny—to the higher moral and spiritual order of humanity. In other words, it is the eternal order—moral, spiritual, ethical holding the meaningful process of the history of the world. Fifthly, its pure and complete essence eludes our apprehension. It symbolises the supreme, unattainable good but its ultimate character makes it impossible for human senses to attain it finally. Hence it is bound to remain for us an object of perennial quest. Its complete attainment will destroy its life-giving vitality

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18. Ibid, p. 191.



and ideality; its attainment will rob it of its mystery and strength. It is extremely beneficial to humanity so long as it remains for man a shining ideal to be realised in course of endless time. Its essence presents a mystery and inexplicable phenomenon. Thus it is worthy of our ultimate ideal and object of our quest. Therefore, the merit lies not in its complete realisation but in the ceaseless endeavour for its realisation. It is vitally real but an ever-receding phenomenon.

Whitehead writes—"The immediate reaction of human nature to the religious vision is worship".<sup>19</sup> The human experience of religion is mixed with the crudest fancies of primitive imaginations. Yet slowly and gradually the vision of religion takes place in the life of humanity under nobler, fuller and richer form and with clearer expression. He says—"It is the one element in human experience which persistently shows an upward trend".<sup>20</sup> The vision often fades and then it reappears; it wanes and waxes; it moves ever towards the perfect expression through ups and downs of growth. And when it renews its force, it recurs with an added richness and purity of content. Whitehead writes—"The fact of the religious vision, and its history of persistent expansion, is our one ground for optimism".<sup>21</sup> Apart from such growing vision of religion human existence is a flash of momentary enjoyment, which reveals a mass of pain and misery—"a bagatelle of transient experience."

The religious vision claims nothing but evokes our spontaneous worship. And the spirit of worship is the creator of the urge for assimilation. The spirit of worship engenders the motive force of mutual love which make

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19. Ibid, p. 191.

20. Ibid, p. 191.

21. Ibid, p. 192.

possible this assimilation. The vision does never over-rule by a baneful force or influence. It is always present to endow humanity with the power of love, whose sole purpose is the realisation of the eternal harmony. The order manifest in nature does not exhibit the over-bearing element of force. The order presents itself as the "harmonious adjustment of complex detail" whereas "evil is the brute motive force of fragmentary purpose, disregarding the eternal vision. Evil is over-ruling, retarding, hurting".<sup>22</sup> The unifying, harmonious vision is the vision of strong and true religion. The vision presents an ideal which is to be realised by the aspiring aspirants. Whitehead says—"That religion is strong which in its ritual and its modes of thought evokes an apprehension of the commanding vision".<sup>23</sup>

Religion is the highway of spiritual adventure. It is not a code of safety or lifeless static mode of thought. It symbolises the eternal hope and ambition of man—an object of perilous quest (after an ever-receding vision of the eternal harmony and freedom). He says—"The death of religion comes with the repression of the high hope of adventure".<sup>24</sup> Religion is not confined to any particular nation or people. True religion according to Whitehead, is a world-loyalty. A truly religious person does not owe allegiance to a particular leader or religion or community or nation. He has loyalty to all religions of the world—to all peoples and beings of the entire universe.

Whitehead writes—"Religion is what the individual

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22. Ibid, p. 192.

23. Ibid, p. 192.

24. Ibid, p. 192.



does with his own solitariness".<sup>25</sup> He thinks that there is a close connection between universality and solitariness; for like solitariness the universality is a "disconnection from immediate surroundings." In my solitariness and isolation from the rest of the world I feel the pulse-beat of the entire humanity and the universe. I feel, then, my basic harmony and unity with the rest of creation. The history of religious development shows that the soul in solitary meditation has been the birth-place of many a high religion. It is the first condition of spiritual realisation and mystic illumination and all the saints and prophets of the world advocate the need of solitariness and solitary meditation for religious development.

Whitehead holds that the history of religion shows four main kinds of expressions of religion. Firstly, religion finds expression in ritual; then it takes an emotional form; then faith becomes its characteristic foundation and finally we find the rationalisation of religious belief into a system of knowledge. Ultimately religion takes its stand on direct experience or religious vision. The experience or insight again consists of realisation in different forms and degrees the existence of a permanent order behind evanescent events and things—a harmony in apparently chaotic world and a guiding principle and purpose behind our acts and the changes in the phenomena. This is the beginning of religion or religions; this is the beginning of religious experience or realisation of religious faith. It is a real and pure state of mind and it creates in the aspirant enthusiasm for reforming life and bringing it in tune with God by emphasising the eternal, permanent and harmonious things of existence. Whitehead writes—"Religion is the art and theory of the internal life of man, so far as it

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25. Religion In The Making, p. 6.

depends on the man himself and what is permanent in the nature of things".<sup>26</sup>

So the essence of true religion bereft of all dogmas, churches, rituals and social enthusiasm which are extraneous matters of religion, consists in the persistent endeavour for self-improvement carried on by the aspirant in isolation with a spirit of non-attachment. Thus Whitehead gives emphasis on two points—namely on the value of personal endeavour and on the permanent nature of reality of things surrounding man. He points out that ultimately religion is a personal affair of man and his personal responsibility. His success in religion is granted by the permanent order of things and values. The success in religion for man is possible by the mastery of self—by the spiritual development of his nature. In other words, the fulfilment of religion lies in the complete self-improvement or self-mastery or self-realisation of the aspiring person. Whitehead in this way gives supreme position to man's personal endeavour in the religious life. He observes that evil is very unstable in this world because of the existence of the moral order which is permanent and eternal. So he points out that "the fact of the instability of evil is the moral order of the world." The moral order makes it impossible for evil to be a permanent factor and ultimately victorious force in this world.

#### IV

Whitehead's concept of God is very difficult to grasp clearly; yet it has fundamental originality and far-reaching significance and value. In the following lines I attempt to outline the main points of his views on God.

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26. Ibid, p. 6.



He visualises the universe as a process of spatio-temporal flux; the characteristics of this process when left alone are purely spatio-temporal. Other characteristics of this eternal flux result when the eternal objects ingress themselves into the spatio-temporal flux. So there are two fundamental realms—the realm of spatio-temporal flux and the realm of eternal objects. And the union of the two realms ushers in the actual occurrences or realities which go to form the universe of concrete factors.

The realm of actuality is the realm of spatio-temporal process and the realm of possibility is the realm of eternal objects. The eternal objects are endowed with actuality when they ingress into the spatio-temporal flux. Thus Whitehead envisages, on the one hand, the world of eternal possibility and, on the other, the world of creative activity. The actual event is nothing but "the meeting point of a world of actualities, on the one side and a world of ideal possibilities, on the other".<sup>27</sup> Explaining the above point Whitehead writes—"The universe exhibits a creativity with infinite freedom and a realm of forms with infinite possibilities; but this creativity and these forms are together impotent to achieve actuality apart from ideal harmony, which is God".<sup>28</sup>

Let us understand the position clearly. The eternal objects of Whitehead roughly correspond to Plato's Ideas or Forms. The eternal objects have unlimited possibilities; they represent the world of possibility. But this realm of possibility is not the world of ultimate reality. For divorced from the flux of events the realm of possibility is an abstract world. Here Whitehead differs from Plato who holds that this realm is the ultimate reality. Accord-

27. See S. Radhakrishnan's *An Idealist View Of Life*, pp. 326-331.

28. *Religion In The Making*, p. 90.



ing to Whitehead, the eternal objects can become concrete reality or objectively real only when they become the actual ingredients of the world of spatio-temporal flux. And when an eternal object ingresses into this realm we have a concrete occurrence; so the world of reality is the sumtotal of such concrete occurrences. In one sense the actual world is a selective one; for this world has come into being out of infinite number of worlds all of which were and are latent in the realm of possibility. Explaining the point C. E. M. Joad writes—"What makes it actual is the ingression of a certain selection of the eternal objects, the relations between which are a certain selection from all possible relations, into the flux of becoming".<sup>29</sup>

Now what is the determining factor in the selection of the eternal objects that ingress into the spatio-temporal flux? According to Whitehead, the determining factor is God. Therefore, God is the selective power. In other words, God is the principle of concretion. He actualises the ideal into real, the potential into factual reality. Whitehead writes—"In the place of Aristotle's God as Prime Mover, we require God as the Principle of Concretion".<sup>30</sup> Again, explaining the point he observes—"We conceive actuality as in essential relations to an unfathomable possibility. Eternal objects inform actual occasions with hierarchic patterns, included and excluded in every variety of discrimination. Another view of the same truth is that every actual occasion is a limitation imposed on possibility, and that by virtue of this limitation the particular value of the shaped togetherness of things emerges."

Actuality is the togetherness of eternal objects and the togetherness of all actual occasions. When an object is

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29. Guide To Philosophy, p. 576.

30. Science And The Modern World, p. 174.



actualised by its ingression into the flux a limitation is imposed on its infinite possibilities. And this limitation is imposed on it by God; otherwise there cannot be any actual occasion. The virtue of this limitation makes possible the actuality of concreteness of that eternal object. An actual occasion exhibits itself as a process; it symbolises the constant becoming or it is a "becomingness." It exhibits itself as a concrete result of the selection of God. So God is not only the Principle of Concretion but also the Principle of Limitation. For by the virtue of the limitation which He "places upon the infinite number of possible worlds, any one of which might have been that one world and only one, actually is".<sup>31</sup> God is also the ultimate irrationality. Whitehead writes—"God is the ultimate limitation, and His existence is the ultimare irrationality".<sup>32</sup> He is the ultimate irrationality because no reason can be given why just these possibilities should have been actualised and not others. Here the human reason fails to account for the determining factors of His selections.

Let me sum up the main points discussed in the clear language of Joad.

1. The universe cannot be made up of mere possibilities; it must contain an element of actuality.
2. In order that a thing may be actual, there must be some limitation on possibilities.
3. The principle of limitation, which, as it were, carves the actual world out of the realm of the infinite possibilities, is God.
4. God is also the "principle of concretion" since it is through Him that unrealised possibilities become actual.
5. The limitation is irrational; no reason.....can be

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31. Guide To Philosophy, p. 576. - ..

32. Science And The Modern World, p. 179.

given why just these possibilities should have been realised and not those. Therefore, God is the "ultimate irrationality".<sup>33</sup>

Whitehead maintains that though God makes possible the actualisation of concrete elements and is the very ground for concrete actuality, He Himself is not concrete. He is beyond any concrete actuality. The ultimate nature of God cannot be known fully by any logical process because His nature is the ground of rationality—hence it is beyond the pale of rationality. Yet the presence of God is absolutely necessary to account for the events of the world. He holds that there is undoubtedly the metaphysical need for a principle of determination but there cannot be any "metaphysical reason for what is determined." God is not unknowable for we can have some knowledge of God through particular experiences. He says—"What further can be known about God must be sought in the region of particular experiences".<sup>34</sup> Yet in respect of the interpretation of these experiences about God mankind has differed profoundly. God has been given many names and each name corresponds to a system of thought "derived from the experiences of those who have used it."

It is not right to pay God metaphysical compliments. It is wrong to conceive Him as the foundation of the metaphysical situation with its ultimate activity. Because if we stick to this conception then we are compelled to visualise in Him the origin of all good as well as of all evil. It makes Him the supreme author of the world-paly and to "Him must therefore be ascribed its short-comings as well as its success." If, on the other hand, God is conceived as the ultimate ground for limitation then we can ascribe to

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33. Guide To Philosophy, p. 577.

34. Science And The Modern World, p. 179.



Him the ability to divide the good from the evil for the establishment of reason "within her domain supreme."

Therefore, God is not the creator of the world in the accepted sense of the term and meaning. Rather He is the precondition of creation—the principle which selects from the realm of infinite possibility and which limits the infinite possibility of eternal objects to usher in the world of concrete actuality. God's existence gives the stamp of reality and uniformity to the order of creation. He is with all creation; the vague, undefined creativity is transformed into the actual order of existence by and through God's mediation. In other words, God is the efficient cause of the world. The creativity is there; He is only leading this creativity with infinite tenderness towards the creation of truth, beauty and goodness. He informs the entire universe in space and time, yet is beyond it. Whitehead writes—"He does not create the world, He saves it, more accurately He is the poet of the world with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty and goodness".<sup>35</sup> Thus Whitehead endows God with a consequent nature which is conscious and God symbolises the measure of the order attained in the process of world-development.

God is the guiding principle of the creative process but He is not the process. He is immanent and transcendent—so the world is. Whitehead does not associate God with all-powerfulness; the world is not the self-sufficient completion of God's creative act. It is continually on the march and has before it possibility of infinite development and advancement towards infinite directions. Whitehead declares that from the absolute stand-point God is impersonal. He says that almost all religions of the world seem

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35 Process And Reality, p. 490.

to agree on this vital point. They all maintain that there may be personal embodiments but the absolute ground is always impersonal. He writes—"There is a large concurrence in the negative doctrine that the religious experience does not include any direct intuition of a definite person, or individual.... There may personal embodiments, but the substratum is impersonal".<sup>36</sup> He shows that Confucian, Buddhist, and Hindu philosophy disclaim the intuition of ultimate personality substantial to the universe. He thinks that though Christian theology holds that the doctrine of a personal God to be true—it is supported only by inference.

The power of God, Whitehead observes, in neither overruling or fearsome. God's power consists in the spontaneous act of worship which His presence and awareness engender in the heart of a true worshipper. And the worship of God is not a rule of safety or an act of weak appeasement. It is the adventure of the aspiring spirit in the perennial quest of what is unattainable. He says—"The power of God is the worship He inspires. The worship of God is not a rule of safety—it is an adventure of the spirit, a flight after the unattainable".<sup>37</sup> And this is also the sum and substance of religion. To become aware of the presence of God and to become the conscious part of the creation which is being led by God towards truth, beauty and goodness is to be religious in the true sense of the term.

## V

The humania has before it the golden time of life-giving era of infinite development and possibility—if it can

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36. Quoted by A. Huxley in *Ends And Means*, p. 294.

37. *Science And The Modern World*; p. 192.



rise to the occasion. The greatest need of the hour, according to whitehead, is the development of man's spiritual insight and sense of the adventure. He thinks that the material power is ethically neutral for it can be used equally for the achievement of good and evil. The material philosophy gives today emphasis on a given nature of environment. It directs the human attention to "the aspect of struggle for existence in a fixed environment." The struggle for existence tends to breed competition, class warfare, commercial antagonism between nations. It is the cause of terrible wars. Therefore, the struggle for existence is not the aim of human life. It presupposes the passive acceptance of the static or fixed environment. It involves the acquiescence of humanity in an animal, unregenerate way of life; so the struggle for existence is not the aim of human life.

The aim of human life or any successful organism is to modify the environment so that man or successful organism can help the cause of progress through co-operation. It is imperative that people should co-operate to modify their environment. The people should not be slaves to the external region of life but must try to remould it in the light of inner development and higher necessities of life. Man's superiority lies in his ability to change the external conditions of life according to inner vision and understanding.

Moreover, the gospel of force and the gospel of uniformity are incompatible with the true social life and progress. The difference between the nations and races, cultures and civilisations are necessary to "preserve conditions under which higher development is possible".<sup>38</sup>

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38. Science And The Modern World, p. 207.

Whitehead writes—"When man ceases to wander he will cease to ascend in the scale of being. Physical wandering is still important, but greater still is the man's spiritual adventures—adventures of thought, adventures of passionate feeling, adventures of aesthetic experience".<sup>39</sup> The new knowledge of the modern times brings to the forefront the need of intellectual reform. It calls for a new orientation of our intellectual convictions and conventions. There is no denying the fact that material power offers to-day opportunity for immense social and all-round advancement in the spheres of external life as a whole. But it must be guided towards the desired, propitious goal by a superior power arising out of balanced understanding and moral aptitude.

The aim of evolution is the production of balanced character which would symbolise a harmonious development of body and mind, intellect and soul, imagination and aspiration of supreme value. Whitehead gives great emphasis on the need of balanced growth. He deprecates the exclusive tendencies for specialisation "produces minds in a groove." So we must try to unite professionalism with all-round progress. He says—"Each profession makes progress, but it is progress in its own groove".<sup>40</sup>

He maintains that the aim of true education is the integral growth of human individuality. For true wisdom is never one-sided; it is not the development of one type of knowledge or person at the cost of all other knowledges and the basic unity of an integral personality. The true wisdom is the result of balanced development. One must try to appreciate the value of variety and not one type of

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39. Ibid, p. 207.

40. Ibid, p. 196.



value of a particular thing. That is, proper perspective of everything is of essential necessity.

He shows that mainly two principles are inherent in the nature of all things—the spirit of change and the spirit of conservation. He says—“There can be nothing real without both. Mere change without conservation is a passage from nothing to nothing.... Mere conservation without change cannot conceive”.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, all organisms should endure through the process of change; they should conserve themselves through the process of flux. They will have constant development by the processes of change and conservation; the change will save conservation from inveteracy and conservation will endow the change with enduring value. Thus both will safeguard the perpetuity and the progressive growth of all things.

According to him, the enduring element of a human personality is the soul. Speaking about the inner self of man he says—“The psychological field.....is the minor permanence.....and the mind is the major permanence, permeating that complete field, whose endurance is the living soul”.<sup>42</sup> To a truly developing soul or organism the process of change is not the enemy to its endurance and existence. For soul or organism learns to absorb the freshness and variety of the changing environment for its growth and advancement. Change is necessary to release the soul from the bondage of static values whose significance is lost in course of time owing to their inveteracy. And this fertilisation of the soul is possible through the cultivation of new aesthetic and other noble values; true art gives the soul the permanent richness of unique value.

In the appreciation of the aesthetic needs and values

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41. Ibid, p. 201.

42. Ibid, p. 201.

modern science has not yet played its necessary part. Its materialistic basis has directed the human attention to things only as opposed to values. This misplaced emphasis on things regardless of the need and power of the value of theirs has been very harmful for mankind. The anti-thesis of value and thing may be a false one but in the realm of the abstract thought it is capable of producing harmful influences. Whitehead shows that this mis-placed emphasis has united with the abstractions of political economy and the result is that all thought connected with the social organisation is expressed in the terms of material things and capital only. In this way the ultimate values have been excluded from life and they have been given to the clergy to keep for Sundays".<sup>43</sup>

This spirit is the root of almost all evils and this harmful tendency has been the cause of class warfare, competition, war, racial hatred and other baneful things of the modern times. In this way a materialistic morality has been evolved in the political and commercial world—a morality without consideration of the real values of human life. The time has come now to undo the wrong done to humanity and the world. The salvation of mankind now depends upon the balanced development of man—upon the uniform growth of spirit and matter, science and religion—upon the vision of the creative movement of the age which would combine the poetry and prose of life, things and values, science and religion, art and philosophy, spiritual refinement and material, all-round advancement in one integral harmony for the welfare of all.

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43. Ibid, p. 203.



## CHAPTER X

### MAHATMA GANDHI ON RELIGION



*Essence Of Religion—Sources Of Religion  
All Religions Lead To God—Religion In  
Practice—Aids To The Practice Of Religion  
—Goals Of Religion.*

"As the new ideas find adequate expression in social life, they will be absorbed into a moral background, and the ideas and beliefs themselves will be deepened and be unconsciously transmitted and sustained. .... Then they will take on religious value. The religious spirit will be revived because it will be in harmony with men's unquestioned scientific beliefs and their ordinary day-to-day social activities. .... Poetry, art, religion are precious things. .... Poetry and religious feeling will be the unforced flowers of life."

—John Dewey—

#### I

Mahatma Gandhi by the term 'religion' does not mean any historical religion but religion which essentially underlies all religions of the world. By that word he understands a religion which brings man face to face with his God or Maker. Religion, according to him, involves faith in the ordered moral government of the universe. This type of religion naturally transcends all customary religions and yet tends to harmonise them and endow them with reality.

Religion is not sectarianism. It is not unreal though it seems to be invisible to the profane eyes.

Religion, Gandhi observes, is a living thing which purifies and changes us, transforms our nature and binds us indissolubly to the truth within. It is the inherent and permanent element in human nature and man can never rest satisfied without giving full expression to this element of his being. The fulfilment of it is found when the human soul has found itself, known its maker and "appreciated the true correspondence between the Maker and itself".<sup>1</sup> Religion should guide all actions of man. Man is bound to have by reason or instinct or superstition a relation to the divine. Religion is concerned with this relation which is based on a moral principle. Religion and moral principle are inseparable. For religion is the observation of truth in the daily life and conduct of humanity. A man may disown religion but he cannot live without it in daily life of his. Man instinctively associates certain good with religious or moral observance and certain wrong with its non-observance.

Religion is not at variance with reason or morality. It is in perfect conformity with moral and spiritual laws and Gandhi rejects any religion which does not appeal to reason or is in conflict with morality. It must have moral basis and co-ordination with the ethics of conduct. A man without morality or a man who is untruthful and cruel can never be religious in the true sense of the term. Religion should take into account the practical affairs of humanity. A religion which is abstract and unrelated to the problems of life is not a true religion. It should help us solve the practical puzzles and problems that we face in our daily life. Gandhi

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1. *My Religion*, p. 3.



says—"Every activity of a man of religion must be derived from his religion, because religion means being bound to God, that is to say, God rules your every breath".<sup>2</sup> So religion consists in man's living relation with God—in man's conduct according to the dictates of truth and morality that flow from the divine. Gandhi gives central place to morality in his concept of religion. Religion is not a dogma or sectarianism or ceremonial or ritual; it is a transforming power in accord with the highest laws of spirituality.

## II

The first outstanding source of religion is saintliness. Purity of conduct in daily life is the necessary basis of it. That is, adherence to truth, virtue, honesty, principles of self-control and other edifying precepts should go to form the source of religion. It is the process of self-realisation or the process of acquiring the knowledge of the self. Its source is not to be found only in any particular religion or church or temple; its source is in the inherent divinity of of man—in the endeavour of man to know himself in the highest sense of the term. So self-realisation or God-realisation or supreme knowledge of the self is the goal of religion.

The second source of religion is universal tolerance. It makes man tolerant to all religions of the world and to have an open, unbiassed mind to grasp the noble message of each and every religion. The toleration of all faiths is the hall-mark of true religiousness. The third source of religion is the firm conviction that morality forms the basis of all beings and things. Everything in this world has a moral background—a moral foundation and aim. In other words,

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2. Ibid, p. 4.

everything has a true significance in the plan and purpose of God's creation. And truth is the sum and substance of morality; truth in practice is morality. Therefore, morality and truth form the inevitable source of religion.

The fourth source of religion is to be found in the principle that holds to the dictum: return good for evil. Evil must be transformed by good, vice by virtue, sin by purity. For evil cannot end evil; Gandhi hence firmly believes in the precept: return good for evil. The fifth source of religion is renunciation. He writes—"That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly".<sup>3</sup> One cannot follow God unless one gives up the sense of possession—the sense of 'me' and 'mine.' So one should try to divest oneself of all one's ego-centric possessions and try to become a true trustee who has control over large possession but "regards not an iota of them as his own." Therefore, non-possession and equality go to form one essential element of religion.

The sixth source of religion is faith in God. One must have faith in and conviction of the existence of God and the moral order. The moral order is upheld by God. One must believe in the immortality of soul—in the essential divinity of every being. The intense and ceaseless search after God, and the constant striving for self-realisation make one truly religious. Without these urges religion is a tame and weak affair. The seventh source of religion is the universal love; this love springs from the faith that there are "infinite possibilities of universal love". It is the love that transcends the limitation of race, land and time. True religion and universal love go hand in hand—one fortifying the other.

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3. Ibid, p. 11.



Gandhi is of opinion that it is wrong to assume or assert that one religion is perfect while other religions are imperfect or inferior. It is equally wrong to maintain that the followers of a particular religion will have salvation or the founder of a particular faith alone has claim to divinity. These dogmatic views tend to befog the true and universal perspective of religion and breed fanaticism and intolerance.

### III

All religions are more or less true and they spring from the same Godead. Yet they seem to be imperfect because they form the symbol in this world of human aspiration and endeavour for spiritual realisation and evaluation. They seem to be imperfect because they have come down to us through imperfect human faculties. Gandhi says—"All proceed from the same God, but all are imperfect because they have come down to us through imperfect human instrumentality".<sup>4</sup> Religions are different paths leading to the same eternal goal. He maintains that it matters little that we take different paths so long as we tend to reach the same destination: God. He feels that religions may be many like the numberless individuals.

In abstract sense and theory there should be only one religion because there is one God. Yet we all know that every individual has his own particular conception of God. There must be different religions according to different temperaments and geographical conditions. Hence, Gandhi does not believe in the conviction that there can be or will be one religion on earth. The concept of one world-religion does not—cannot serve any purpose. We should

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4. Ibid, p. 19.

try to find the fundamental and common factors of all religions and work to usher in mutual toleration and understanding.

He maintains that mere toleration may imply a gratuitous assumption of the inferiority of other faiths to one's own. So he thinks that the attitude of Ahimsa (non-violence or universal love) is the correct attitude towards other religious faiths. That is, one should have equal love and reverence to other faiths as he accords to his own. This attitude involves the understanding that religions including one's own may be imperfect because they manifest themselves through the defective human senses and apprehension. The true seeker of truth, who follows the law of love readily admits this imperfection in religions. Imperfection is there because we have not yet attained God or full vision of truth. We are still in quest of God or perfect goal and we should be humbly conscious of our imperfection. And because we are imperfect and because we are seekers now religions conceived and evaluated by us are naturally imperfect. When we attain the truth—when we become one with God Who is the embodiment of truth—when we become perfect in knowledge and action—we become perfect and religions conceived by our perfect understanding become perfect too.

We are yet to realise religion in its perfection by our true knowledge. In this issue religion is conceived as progressive and in this sense religion is subject to the process of evolution and re-interpretation. Gandhi say—"Progress towards Truth, towards God, is possible only because of such evolution".<sup>5</sup> If all faiths are imperfect and subject to the process of evolution and re-interpretation the question,

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5. Ibid, p. 20.



then, of comparative merit does not arise at all. Every faith constitutes a revelation of the truth of God but is also liable to error due to the human limitations. So one must have reverence to one's own and to all other religions. Yet one should not be blind to the defects of one's own religion and other faiths. One should always be ready to blend with one's faith all acceptable features of other faiths. One should always try to the best of one's abilities to remedy the error or evil that has crept in one's religion and other religions. To leave one's own religion on the ground that it is defective is totally wrong. It is the duty of all persons belonging to different religions to remedy the evils of their respective religions and attain through steadfast adherence to their own faiths self-realisation or God-realisation.

Gandhi admits that in the true universal sense there is one, true and perfect religion but it becomes many "as it passes through human medium." One world-religion is beyond the pale of human expression and use and understanding. So the need of religions persists. If a man truly realises the essence of his religion he realises the common elements and aim of all religions too. Gandhi says—"True knowledge of religion breaks down the barriers between faith and faith".<sup>6</sup> Again, one should not judge another religion from the stand-point of one's own; this creates wrong impression and misleads the critic. He should judge religions of others from the view-point of theirs. This attitude would help to create mutual understanding and respect so far as all faiths are concerned.

Gandhi is of opinion that one should not find fault with the scriptures of other faiths. On the contrary, it should be the privilege of man to practise the truths that

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6. Ibid, p. 20.



are found in them. It is only through reverential approach of the aspirant to faiths other than his own makes possible for him the realisation of the principle of equality of all religions of the world. Yet he should not be blind to the defects of other faiths just as he would be severe with the faults of his own religion. Gandhi only deprecates the fault-finding attitude and the arrogant, chauvinistic consciousness that my religion is alone perfect and all other faiths are of inferior type and imperfect nature. It is the duty of every cultured man and woman to read sympathetically and reverentially the scriptures of the world. Because if we respect other faiths as we would have them to respect our own a friendly, sympathetic and sincere study of the world religions is our sacred duty. The comparative study of religions helps the understanding of all religious phenomena; it broadens the outlook releasing the aspirants from all dogmatism and fanaticism.

A man should not be judged by the label of religion or profession he follows. He should be judged by his actions alone irrespective of his profession or religion. Yet during one's earthly existence one is bound to have the label of a particular religion. So there is nothing wrong in following one's own religion so long as one is aware of the fundamentals of morality and equality of all religions. If a man truly loves and reverts his own religion he should be alive to find defects of his faith so that he may be up and doing for their immediate removal. Gandhi says—"Indeed, faithfulness, not blind adherence, demands a keener perception of shortcomings and therefore a livelier sense of the proper remedy for the removal".<sup>7</sup>

He compares one's own religion with one's own marriage. Just as the marriage is indissoluble—so also the

7. Ibid, p. 24.



tic of religion. Secondly, as a husband remains faithful to his wife or wife to her husband because of some indefinable but irresistible attraction, so also does one remain irresistibly faithful to one's own religion and finds satisfaction in such adherence. Thirdly, just as a faithful husband does not consider other women inferior to his wife to sustain his faith in her (and vice versa) so does a person belonging to one religion need not consider other religions inferior to his own to have faith in his own religion. Fourthly, just as faithfulness of husband to his wife does not make him blind to her shortcomings—so does not the faithful adherence of one to one's faith make one blind to the defects of one's own religion.

God has created different faiths as He has votaries thereof. No one can even in secret think that his neighbour's faith is inferior to his. Every man should live and try to perfect himself in his own faith because in God's house there are many rooms which are equally holy. Again, there cannot be any common platform of all religions if one is inferior or superior to another. The common elements which are found in all religions are equally holy and valuable. Gandhi does not advocate the policy of conversion or proselytism. He has come to the following conclusions as regards different religions of the world.

1. All religions are true.
2. All religions have some error in them.
3. All religions are dear to him (Gandhi) as his own religion is dear to him, in as much as all human beings should be dear to him as his close relative.<sup>8</sup>

#### IV

Gandhi maintains that the existence of everything is conditional upon the existence of God. God sustains

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8. Ibid, p. 33.

creation and is its Parent in the real sense of the term. If God is not—nothing can exist. God is one yet He is the fount of many; He is smaller than an atom and bigger than the biggest thing on earth; He pervades everything through and through. Reason in the accepted sense of the term is powerless to fathom Him—to measure His eternal mystery; He is beyond the grasp of human intellect and no earthly logic can comprehend Him. Though faith unshakable alone can we come to realise God and the human faith declares unequivocally: "God is, was and ever shall be".<sup>9</sup> Yet those who deny the existence of God are at liberty to do so. God is merciful and compassionate and His grace equally sustains and illuminates the theists and atheists.

God's indefinable, mysterious power pervades the entire realm of creation. One feels that eternal presence of God in the heart but one cannot define this phenomenon or perceive it with logical process of the senses. God's presence pervades as well as transcends the senses. Gandhi thinks that it is possible to some extent to come to an understanding of God through reason. The orderliness of the universe, its unalterable laws and security, its soul-stirring beauty go to prove the operation and existence of God. For blind law or random uniformity or conscious fortuity are a contradiction in terms. The laws that govern the phenomena cannot be blind; the laws are symbolical of the supreme Godhead; God is the law-giver and the law and the law-giver are one.

One dimly feels the evanescent character of the world and the presence of something unchangeable in the midst of all changes. One feels that this changeless Being is

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9. Ibid, p. 34.



the living power that holds all together, creates, dissolves and re-creates. Gandhi says that this informing power is God. And God's power is benevolent and not malevolent because—"in the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth truth persists, in the midst of darkness light persists".<sup>10</sup> Therefore, God is life, truth, love and supreme good. God rules the heart and transforms man's nature; God's existence should be proved by the transformed conduct and character of these who have felt the presence of Him within.

The presence of evil is there and we must accept its existence and fight against it to realise God. God is untouched by evil. One is near to God when one is pure. The living faith is the testimony of God's presence. Rationalism is good but it becomes a hideous monster when it claims for itself omnipotence. To attribute the power of omnipotence to reason is as bad as piece of idolatry as is the worship of stone believing it to be God. The violation of God's law carries with it the purifying and compelling punishment.

Gandhi regards God as truth but not as person; God is an idea, existence, law and order. His law governs everything and rules human action allowing freedom to all to choose between good and evil. God does not break the laws of nature and there are no miracles in the sense of infringement or interruption of nature's laws or operation. God is symbol of ethics and morality—the source of life and light, yet He is beyond all things. God is conscience. He is a personal God to those who need His personal presence. He is embodied to those who need His touch. He is the purest reason; He is in us and beyond us; He is long suffering and patient; He is everforgiving.

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10. Ibid, p. 35.

God is not only truth but truth is God. The latter statement that truth is God is a wider one and has wider scope and connotation. The search after truth is the search after God and in this sense an atheist is also a theist and we come to truth through universal love. Gandhi equates truth with existence or beness and existence with God, and God with universal love. For God is and all else is not. When one wants to find truth as God the only means is universal love or non-violence. Truth again is the voice that speaks in the innermost recess of our being. But this voice of truth can only be heard by those who have kept the vows of truth, continence, non-violence, poverty, and non-possession.

Lastly, there are innumerable definitions of God because His manifestations are without number. But Gandhi feels that the primary criterion of God is Truth eternal and universal. The belief in God is the life-breath of humanity. He says—"You blast my belief in God, and I am dead".<sup>11</sup> Every human being should see God and His grace everywhere. The supreme aim of life, Gandhi says, is the self-realisation—is the urge to see God face to face—is to attain liberation or Moksha.

## V

Gandhi holds that true religion should pervade the entire life of humanity and man's conduct must be guided by religion. Religion must find expression in man's daily life and action and aspiration. His ideas and hopes, ambitions and visions should be enveloped by the divine influence of religion. Non-violence and love in thought and action are the manifestation of true religion. It is the soul-

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11. Ibid, p. 43.



force or the power of God in us. Non-violence is the universal love and one must learn to use the force of love among all that lives and in the use of such love we find the direct manifestation of the knowledge of God. God can only be found through divine love for the whole universe.

The only way to know God is to envision Him in His creation and be one with the creation. This identification with creation is possible through selfless service to humanity—by the awareness of one's own identity with all that lives and moves and has existence in God. Humanity and God are inseparable but they do not co-exist. God envelops and pervades humanity and is not exhausted by it; He extends far beyond. The service to humanity is the service to God. Therefore, Gandhi says—"To serve is my religion".<sup>12</sup> Religion consists in the service of the helpless and the poor. Thus non-violence is based on the service and truth is grounded on non-violence or universal love and religion is based on truth. So, according to Gandhi, truth, non-violence, service, universal love, self-realisation and religion mean one and the same thing.

Self-realisation is not possible without service and the selfless service is only possible through life of renunciation. Gandhi thinks that the human body is meant for service and renunciation and not for indulgence. God has given us the body to serve His creation with it. The act of renunciation differentiates man from the beast. Renunciation does not mean escape from humanity and the world of action. It is an attitude of selflessness which guides all the activities of the life of man. And the life of true renunciation is the pinnacle of art and true creative enjoyment. The struggle for existence is not conducive to the permanent

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12. Ibid, p. 52.

well-being of man. So it must be replaced by the law of mutual service. Thus the law of the brute will be replaced by the law of humanity.

Religion finds expression in the contentment and companionship of God only. True happiness is the peace of the service and dedication to the will of God. Religion in practice is true humility and self-effacement, annihilation and removal of egoism and selfishness. The evil in us is destroyed when we reduce ourselves to the zero by destroying the seat of egoism in us. So long as we cling to ego-centric action and selfishness, desire and ambition the evil will stick to us because it has its breeding ground in those propensities of ours.

In this world two laws generally operate—the law of an eye for an eye and the law of love for hate. Gandhi subscribes to the latter law unconditionally; he thinks that we must oppose hate with love, enmity with friendliness, evil with goodness, darkness with light. This is the religion in action. He says—“.....to befriend the one who regards himself as your enemy, is the quintessence of true religion”.<sup>13</sup> This process of love would transform evil into good, vice and sin into virtue and purity and thus fulfil the true aim of religion.

Moreover, religion is concerned with means as well as with ends; religion in action consists in purifying the means for the propitious ends. End cannot justify the evil means; there is no wall of separation between means and ends; so the evil of one vitiates the other. One must have always pure and noble means for all glorious ends. The realisation of the goal is in true proportion to that of the means.

Religion consists in non-violence and love for all

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13. Ibid, p. 58.



including the enemies. Perfect non-violence is the complete absence of ill-will against all that lives. It embraces the realms of the animal and insects and plant. Carrying the idea of the universal love to its logical conclusion Gandhi says that practice of religion should also include the non-killing of animals, vegetarianism, cessation of experiment on animals, kindness to animals including birds and insects. For as God pervades everything there is nothing inanimate in creation and the lowest form of creation is just as imperishable as the soul of man.

Restraint or self-mastery is the law of our true being. When we conquer our base nature we become truly human beings and Gandhi says—"For highest perfection is unattainable without highest restraint".<sup>14</sup> Man as animal is violent but as soul he is non-violent. When man awakens to his true being he is bound to become an apostle of peace and love. The concepts of truth, harmony, brotherhood, justice flow from this eternal element of non-violence or universal love. Man faces two inexorable alternatives in his life; he should either move forward or go backward. One can never remain for ever static because everything is kinetic in this world; it is imperative that man must advance morally and spiritually or go backward which will mean the doom of humanity.

There is a higher law—a law which is beyond evil and destruction, which affirms the value of love and creation. And man must adhere to this law of life for it gives peace and meaning to the mysterious nature and life around man. It is possible to combine the greatest love for all with the greatest opposition to evil of any type. And religion makes man fearless. Man must only fear God and love Him and

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14. Ibid, p. 61.

when he only fears God he ceases to fear man or anything. Gandhi thinks that fearlessness is the first condition of spirituality.

Religion makes man optimistic, rouses in him faith in and reliance on God. It convinces man of the final emergence of victory of soul over flesh, goodness over evil, justice over injustice. So let man fail thousand times but let him not lose faith. Suffering is the law of human life and through suffering alone can a man advance. True religion consists in "allowing others the maximum of convenience at the maximum of inconvenience to us, even at the risk of life".<sup>15</sup> The dignity of man needs obedience to the higher law—to the power of spirit only and not to the physical might. The root of evil is the absence of a living faith in a living God. Peace is based on renunciation and if one nation accepts it permanent establishment of peace is possible. Peace will elude nations so long as they cling to war, deception and fraud. Peace—true peace can only be based on freedom and equality of all races and nations.

## VI

Gandhi feels that the practice of religion must be based on certain factors which would be the sustaining aids to the practice of religion. Gandhi, therefore, suggests certain aids to the practice of religion. I outline in the following lines his suggestions.

**Fasting:** A genuine fast purifies and cleanses the body, mind and soul of man. It increases the strength of the soul by subordinating and subduing the flesh. A true fast must be accompanied by the strong resolve to receive pure thoughts and determination to resist all evil temptations.

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15. Ibid, p. 67.



Restraint in diet is essential for self-realisation like the restraint in thought and deed and speech. The fasting of body must also mean the fasting of the senses simultaneously. One must eat only to sustain the body and as much as it is necessary. Eating for the sake of pleasure should be avoided. Fasting must be accompanied by the will-force for truth. Yet the mortification of flesh when it is already under control is meaningless and it is forbidden. True fasting is the prayer or preparation for it.

Prayer: Gandhi says—"Prayer is the very soul and essence of religion, and therefore, must be the very core of the life, for no man can live without religion".<sup>16</sup> One must pray to God not with lips only but with the entire heart. Prayer cleanses the heart; all should pray—the dumb and the stammerer, the wise and the fool, the ignorant and the stupid. Faith and prayer steer us through the stormy seas of life and make us fully aware of God within and without. Selfless service makes one prayerful. Millions of peoples belonging to different races and religions the world over pray daily unto God. Prayer symbolises the yearning of the heart to be one with the Maker and an invocation of His blessings. It sobers us and humbles our unreasonable arrogance and egotism and makes us stand in awe and adoration before the presence and majesty of God.

There are no fixed rules and regulations about prayer. It must be sincere and spontaneous, profound and moving. Our life should be a constant act of prayer for our good and for the good of the whole world—an act of eternal worship of God in thought and conduct, aspiration and vision. Man is destined to conquer old, bad habits, to overcome the evil in him and to restore good to its rightful

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16. Ibid, p. 89.

place; and religion does accomplish this task mainly through the process of prayer. It involves a living faith in the reality and benevolence of God. By prayer man is delivered from evil to the light of truth and religion and Godhead. Failure, despair, disappointment may come but finally prayer which is also faith is triumphant. It becomes the perennial delight and recreation to humanity and the perpetual impetus to selfless service. Self-seeking prayer is not good at all or the prayer of the arrogant. Gandhi says—"Prayer is either petitional or in its wider sense is inward communion. In either case the ultimate result is the same".<sup>17</sup> The petitional prayer should be for the purification of the heart from ignorance and darkness and not for any material gain. The real hunger for the awakening of the inherent divinity in man forces him to fall back on prayer. The perpetual communion with the divine is the ultimate aim of prayer. It is the constitutional longing of man to lose himself in the divinity which envelops all creation.

**Name of God:** The repetition of the holy name of God has immense value in dispelling fear and in infusing courage and hope and other religious sentiments. The people belonging to different religions may repeat sincerely the various names of God and derive maximum solace in such act of emotion and meditation. A truly religious man will take God's name with every breath. For he is constantly contemplating on God. The repetition of the holy name of God also induces a state of meditation and spiritual illumination in exceptional cases.

**Five Vows:** Taking vows is not a sign of weakness but is of tremendous strength and courage. The vows

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17. Ibid, p. 95.



immensely aid us in the practice of true religion. Gandhi says—"To do at any cost something that one ought to do constitutes a vow".<sup>18</sup> To say I would observe the vow as far as possible is to succumb to the first temptation. The vow must be kept fully, completely and permanently. God is the very image of a vow. So we should not doubt for a moment the need of vows for self-purification and self-realisation. Vows are essential in this world of temptation and pitfalls.

**The Vow of Truth:** The word truth is derived from the word existence or being in Sanskrit. So true existence is God. In other words, Truth is God or God is Truth. Therefore, Gandhi maintains that the adherence to this eternal Truth is the sole justification of human existence. All our actions should be centred on truth and it should be our life-breath. No high principle or idealism can be observed without devotion to truth. The vow of truth consists in strict and constant observance of truth in thought, speech and action in daily life. The quest of truth often involves self-suffering—even death. This vow leads us to true devotion and to God in the end. If one fails let him openly confess and promise never to commit the wrong again. This is the purest type of repentance. The observance of the vow of silence often and on helps one keep the vow of truth; silence clears the doubt—gives us lead and light in times of confusion and crisis.

**The Vow of Love:** Perfect Truth, Gandhi observes, cannot be fully realised so long as we are imprisoned in this mortal coil. Eternal Truth can only be dimly visualised through aspiration; this ephemeral physical existence stands in the way of our seeing truth face to face from the highest

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18. Ibid, p. 103.

point of view. This basic impossibility led the ancient seekers of truth, Gandhi observes, to the path of Ahimsa or universal love. This path alone can lead us eventually to the Eternal Truth. Those ancient seers realised that violence stood in the way of truth's manifestation; it led man from enemy without to the imagined enemy without. By destroying others man cannot improve his inner lot or reach the truth. So the real and only way to win our enemy within and without is the way of universal love. It purifies both the lover and the beloved in the Platonic sense. The vow of love consists in complete absence of ill-will against anything that exists—inanimate or animate. Suffering and patience are the two pillars of the vow of love. This vow makes us brave, decreases our selfish attachment to mundane things and destroys the evil in us. The vow of love is necessary for the attachment of truth. Love or non-violence is the means—the end is the attainment of truth.

The Vow of Chastity: Truth-seeking and self-gratification are a contradiction in terms. Realisation of truth involves selflessness, and sense—renunciation. Similarly, the universal love is impossible without self-control and asceticism. One should adhere to the vow of perfect continence to the best of his abilities. It is best for a man or a woman not to marry, Gandhi says. But those who are married should try to free their love from the impurity of flesh or lust to the best of their abilities. Gandhi says—“.....one who would obey the law of Ahimsa cannot marry” and the people who are already married “can behave as if they were not married”.<sup>19</sup>

The vow of continence should be observed in thought,

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19. Ibid, p. 108.



word and deed. We must non-coöperate with the mind when it wanders in evil thoughts. The vow of perfect continence is not so difficult to observe as it is generally supposed to be. It means really the search after God or truth. If one adheres to this search other spiritual exercises will become easy for one. Gandhi says—"Realisation of God is impossible without complete renunciation of the sexual desire".<sup>20</sup> It means the complete mastery over all the senses. Gandhi gives emphasis in this connection on the mastery over palate which leads to the mastery over other senses including the sex. Avoidance of bad company, evil talk and thought, music and book, the company of saintly persons, good books, the repetition of the holy name of God or Mantram, diet of fruits and vegetables help one greatly to maintain the vow of continence. Fasting is also essential and above all God's grace is also necessary. The first step towards the complete continence is the realisation of the necessity of perfect chastity or continence. The second step consists in gradual control of the senses. The third step is to have pure and clean companions, environment and training. The fourth step is sincere and constant prayer unto God for His grace and strength of soul.

The Vow of Non-possession: Possession, Gandhi maintains, implies provision for the future. A seeker of truth cannot do that. So a true seeker reposes faith in God's providence for He would surely supply all requirements of a simple man engaged after the pursuit of truth and God. Saints and true devotees of God have always exhibited the truth and efficacy of such way of life. Each person should retain possession of only what he needs and

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20. Ibid, p. 110.

then there will be no want for all the people of the world. Perfection is the goal of life; so perfect non-possession is the ideal which should be kept in view and we should examine critically our possessions in the light of this ideal and try to reduce them gradually. Civilisation consists in deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants and not in the multiplication of wants. This alone can promote true contentment and increase in us the capacity for service. The vow of non-possession in deed, thought and desire leads to complete renunciation for the service of God and humanity. One should live, eat and drink, sleep and wake up for service only. The evolution of soul is the real criterion of advancement of mankind.

The Vow of Non-stealing: It is impossible that a man should steal and at the same time claim the truth. Gandhi writes—"Yet every one of us is consciously or unconsciously more or less guilty of theft".<sup>21</sup> He thinks that it is theft to take something from another man with his permission even when one has no real need of the thing. One should not receive anything which is not necessary for living in true sense of the term. The vow of non-stealing entails progressive reduction of one's wants. The world of poverty mainly owing to the violation of this principle has come to stay. One should destroy the desire to acquire, the desire to cast a greedy look on anything belonging to others. Ideals and ideas may also be stolen; this is also harmful to the dignity of man. Gandhi concludes—"If we are to be non-violent, we must not wish for anything on this earth which the meanest or the lowest of human beings cannot have".<sup>22</sup>

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21. Ibid, p. 119.

22. Ibid, p. 121.



## VII

The entire gamut of man's activities constitutes an indivisible whole. One cannot divide social, economic, political and religious works and affairs into watertight compartments in the life of man. The goals of religion are inseparably connected with all human activities. The aim of religion should be to provide a moral basis for all these human actions because without moral foundation our life would be only a "maze of sound and fury signifying nothing".<sup>23</sup> The goal of religion is to transform groups, communities, even nations into the followers of truth and universal love or non-violence. If religion is not translated into action in all departments of life—it is a misnomer.

Religion in social sphere: Gandhi firmly believes in the doctrine of advaita or oneness of all. He thinks that there is no such thing as inherited or acquired superiority. He says—".....my interpretation of advaita excludes totally any idea of superiority at any stage whatsoever. I believe implicitly that all men are born equal....All have the same soul as any other".<sup>24</sup> He thinks that it is unmanly for any person to claim superiority over a fellow-being. The final goal of all religions is to realise the essential oneness of all. In this connection it is pertinent to remember that Gandhi visualises equality of all persons in the spiritual or philosophical sense but he admits that one man may be more talented than another. All persons are equal in the sense that they all go to form the realm of humanity. They come from the same source and have their being in the same eternal existence.

The individual freedom is not inconsistent with social aim and progress. It is the duty of every one to adjust

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23. Ibid, p. 122.

24. Ibid, p. 122.



his individuality to the needs of social progress. The aim is to enrich the individual and the social unity simultaneously by mutual understanding and co-operation. The unrestricted individualism and social totalitarianism are equally harmful. The golden mean should be adopted. The individual virtue or vice is bound to affect the society as a whole. Hence whether an individual is bad or good is not merely his own concern but really the concern of the whole society or nation—of the world even. Gandhi says—"Therefore, I believe that if one man gains spiritually the whole world gains with him, if one falls the whole world falls to that extent".<sup>25</sup>

Religion in economic sphere: Religion can be applied with great success to economic sphere. If there is real understanding between the employee and the employer based on mutual kindness, justice and fairplay both will be the gainers ultimately. Gandhi thinks that true economics or economics of justice as he calls it never militates against the highest religious or ethical standard just as all true ethics must also be good economics. True economics is based on social justice and promotes the welfare of all equally including the weakest. If I pay due wages to a worker I would not amass unnecessary riches and the worker would not be unnecessarily poor. In this way the stream of justice will gather strength and flow onward. Gandhi deprecates competition and one injustice leads ultimately to ruin so far as both employee and employer are concerned.

Men are born equal; we all have equal opportunity, but we all have not the same capacity. It is true that some persons will earn more, others less. Now Gandhi is of opinion that let the talented persons earn wealth according to law of economic justice but let them hold the greater bulk

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25. Ibid, p. 124.



of their wealth in trustee-ship and utilise the same for the good of all. Such talented people should exist as trustees and their income should go to the common fund. Equal distribution means that each person should have the wherewithal to supply all his wants which are natural and no more. Gandhi writes—"Indeed at the root of this doctrine of equal distribution must lie that of the trusteeship of the wealthy for surplus wealth possessed by them".<sup>26</sup>

But if the rich people refuse to act like this the workers can force their hands by non-violent non-co-operation and civil disobedience. Gandhi in this connection gives emphasis on self-sufficient rural economy, cottage industry and the like. He thinks that a true votary of religion of universal love cannot subscribe to the utilitarian theory of the greatest good of the greatest number. Rather he should struggle always for the good of all and if necessary die in the endeavour. He says—"The utilitarian to be logical will never sacrifice himself. The absolutist will even sacrifice himself".<sup>27</sup> Therefore, if we are made in God's own image the highest good of all we must endeavour to achieve and promote. This is the goal of religion in the sphere of economy.

Religion in the political sphere: True democracy should be established by non-violence. And in it there will be equal freedom and every one will be his or her master. He says—"Individual freedom can have the fullest play only under a regime of unadulterated Ahimsa".<sup>28</sup> In the ideal state every one is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a way that he never stands in the way of his neighbours and their freedom. So in the ideal state there is no political

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26. Ibid, p. 127.

27. Ibid, p. 129.

28. Ibid, p. 130.



power because there is no state. But that is not possible in this world of human beings; at least that is now not possible. Gandhi, therefore, subscribes to the famous saying of Thoreau—that government is the best that governs the least. Gandhi is not in favour of concentration of power in the state or government because it may tend to curb individual freedom, which lies at the root of all progress. Gandhi has also in mind the vision of an ideal state—a vision of grand yet simple utopia. Gandhi describes the ideal state based on religion of universal love in the following words—“Under Swaraj (free nation or government) based on non-violence nobody is anybody’s enemy, everybody contributes his or her due quota to the common good, all can read and write, and their knowledge keeps growing from day to day. Sickness and disease are reduced to the minimum. There is no such government for gambling, drinking, and immorality or for class hatred”.<sup>29</sup>

Gandhi visualises a nationalism which is completely free from chauvinism or militant spirit of aggression. So Gandhi thinks that patriotism or nationalism should be consistent with internationalism. One nation should not harm another nation. A patriot should always remember that just as there is one God so also there is one unified humanity. Service is international for God has never made any frontier. We may have many bodies but we have essentially one underlying soul. So Gandhi concludes—“My religion and my patriotism derived from my religion embrace all life. I want to realise identity not merely with beings called human, but I want to realise identity with all life..... because we claim descent from the same God, and that being so, all life in whatever form it appears must be essentially one”.<sup>30</sup>

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29. Ibid, pp. 131-132.

30. Ibid, p. 132.



## CHAPTER XI

### ALBERT EINSTEIN ON RELIGION



*Significance Of His Views On Religion—The  
Meaning Of Life—The World As He Sees It  
Science And Religion—Scientist And Religion  
Modern Trends.*

"We all know that there are regions of human spirit untrammelled by the world of physics. In the mystic sense of creation around us—in the expression of art, in a yearning towards God, the soul goes upward and finds the fulfilment of something implanted in its nature. The sanction of the development is within us, a striving born with our consciousness or an Inner light proceeding from a greater power than us. Science can scarcely question this sanction....."

—A. S. Eddington—

#### I

The superficial opinion that Albert Einstein has been an atheist is incorrect to the extreme. Any person who is conversant with the profound sayings and writings of his about religion, morality and allied subjects is fully aware of his deeply religious nature. His religion and religious conviction may not conform to the religion and religious conviction of the common people or owe loyalty to ordinary rules and regulations of general religion. Nevertheless, his

religious vision and conviction, profundity and universality present an epic challenge to the rank materialism and atheism of the day.

Einstein is the greatest scientist of this age—if not of all times. His far-reaching theories and discoveries have revolutionised the entire realm of modern thought and brought about radical changes in the fields of neo-physics. Therefore, his views on morality and religion are of profound significance and have deep and abiding implications in modern times. The importance of his views on religion can never be overestimated and the views must be visualised against the background of the superficial opinion that he has been an atheist.

## II

Einstein holds that every sensible man is bound to ponder over the meaning and significance of human life and the very answer to this question involves a religion. For the meaning of human life presupposes a deeper way of life which is at once holy and edifying to humanity. It is natural for us to ask about the ultimate meaning of human existence or the organic life as a whole. The answer to this question will supply the key to the puzzles and problems of life—will provide us with a philosophy of life. The question implies that life is very precious and meaningful. Einstein firmly maintains that he who regards his life and that of his fellow-creatures as meaningless or insignificant is not only unfortunate but also disqualified for human life and existence.

To Einstein life is very valuable and has a deep meaning which we must endeavour to understand and grasp to the best of our abilities. By the word 'life' he does not mean only the totality of human existence but also the sum-total



of the entire organic realm that exists in space and time. To unravel the mystery of life is to invoke the presence and operation of a religion. He says—"To answer this question at all implies a religion".<sup>1</sup> In answering the question about existence of life on earth we come face to face with religion which is vitally concerned with the meaning and aim of human life in particular and life in general. Religion, too, is symbolical of a meaning of the way of life; it is co-existent with life; it is its sacred mission to present to man a spiritual value of his existence—for without value or purpose the life and work of man would be a misnomer.

### III

Einstein feels that the human beings are here on this earth for a short sojourn—that human mortality presents a sad spectacle of an extraordinary situation. Man does not naturally profess to know for what purpose he is really here, though sometimes in moments of deep and penetrating insight he may become aware of the mission and vision of his life. One need not go deeper to realise the extreme interdependence of human beings. Man is bound to man by an inseparable bond of sympathy—by a feeling of interdependence in the true sense of the term. In our daily normal existence we live for us and also for others; the destinies of persons are interlinked and interrelated.

I cannot claim to possess an isolated destiny of my own independent of the destinies of the teeming millions the world over. I am as individual is bound to all individuals of the world by a tie of fellow-feeling—by a feeling that my existence, my inner and outer life depend upon the contributions of others, dead and living. Therefore, it is

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1. The World As I See It, p. 1.



my sacred duty to contribute something for the welfare of others—to contribute my mite to the common fund of humanity. Einstein says—"A hundred times every day I remind myself that my inner and outer life depend on the labours of other men, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving".<sup>2</sup> Einstein believes in social justice and in the supreme value of simple living which, according to him, is beneficial for every body physically and mentally. He writes—"The ordinary objects of human endeavour—property, outward success, luxury—have always seemed to me contemptible".<sup>3</sup>

He feels that every body acts under external compulsion and in accordance with the inner necessity. Thus in the philosophical sense he does not believe in human indeterminism. But his opinion should not be confused with the doctrine of fatalism. Supernatural agency or God does not pre-determine the actions of men and they are not in any way controlled from beyond. Einstein is quite emphatic on this point. Man acts in accordance with inner necessity. I do not act wrongfully, I do not perform any harmful act—I tell the truth and stick to the path of virtue and justice, simply because I am obeying the dictates of the law of morality. Morality demands from us obedience to moral laws; it demands that my actions should conform to my inner convictions. Similarly, the true inner necessity demands that I should act in such a manner as not to have any harmful reactions that may recoil on me. So the inner necessity in the philosophical sense is the morality or conscience. Again, in the empirical sphere and in the realm of worldly activities we cannot deny that we act under

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2. Ibid, p. 1.

3. Ibid, p. 2.



external compulsion arising out of mundane and other allied necessities. In highly developed beings the inner necessity assumes the role of spontaneous moral obligation and in ordinary persons it takes the form of external moral compulsion.

Einstein is of opinion that the objective enquiry into metaphysical meaning of life and the creation around us may not be helpful to man. Because such a venture into the realm of the unknown is unrelated to the empirical existence and the need of humanity. Yet every man is bound to possess certain ideals that determine the direction and standard of his endeavour and judgment and evaluation of values. And in this sense Einstein does not visualise ease, comfort and happiness as ends in themselves. This is the stand of all higher religions of the world. The ideals of his life have been truth, beauty and goodness. They have inspired him with courage and hope to face the tregedies and vicissitudes of life cheerfully. He writes—"The ideals which have lighted me on my way and time after time given me new courage to face life cheerfully have been Truth, Goodness and Beauty".<sup>4</sup>

He has always felt deeply the growing need of detachment and solitude. He has been aware of the sad limitations of the possibility of mutual understanding and sympathy with one's fellow-beings. That is, mutual sympathy is of limited appeal and power. On the other hand, the spirit of detachment or renunciation, he believes, frees a man largely from the binding and often weakening opinions of others, from their habits and judgements which often restrict the free spirit and vision of the individual of higher order. The spirit of renunciation makes man avoid the temptaton to take

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4. Ibid, p. 2.

his stand on the insecure foundations of changeable and flattering public opinions and influences.

Force—physical and material always attracts the men of low morality and the absolute power has inevitable tendency to corrupt man. In the sphere of human life, Einstein observes, the really valuable thing is not the state but “creative, sentient individual, the personality.” Such free and creative personality alone can create what is noble and sublime.

Einstein dislikes war and hatred, the hard-instinct in men, the social inequality, racial oppression and brutalisation of man by man, the conspiracy of politics and rank misuse of patriotism of nationalism. He is certain that wealth in the long run cannot help humanity really or carry it forward towards a lastingly propitious goal. He writes—“I am absolutely convinced that no wealth in the world can help humanity forward, even in the hands of the most devoted worker in this cause. The example of great and pure characters is only thing that produce fine ideas and noble ideals”.<sup>5</sup> He thinks that money only appeals to selfishness and constantly, inexorably tempts its owner to abuse it.

The human life has special significance because the human being as social being has the special advantage of living in a society. The individual has the advantage of membership of the great human society that directs his spiritual and material existence from the cradle to the grave. So a man's value to him and to the community as a whole depends on how far his feelings, thoughts and actions are directed in promoting the welfare of his own and that of his fellow-beings. Yet we must recognise the need and the value of free individuality of men because only the indivi-

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5. Ibid, p. 21.



dual by free thinking and creative process can create new values, new moral and spiritual standards to which the life of society would and should gradually conform. Einstein says—"Without creative, independently thinking and judging personalities the upward development of society is as unthinkable as the development of the individual without the nourishing soil of the community".<sup>6</sup>

#### IV

The rapid outline above of Einstein's views on various important subjects now places us in a good position to understand and realise his original views on religion and allied subjects.

Einstein holds that the desire for the fulfilment of necessity and cessation of sufferings has been the motive force of all human actions and thoughts throughout the world and ages. He says—"Everything that the human race has done and thought is concerned with the satisfaction of felt needs and the assuagement of pain".<sup>7</sup> The satisfaction of the felt necessities and the longing for the assuagement of pain of every kind have been the primary motive forces of human actions and thoughts down the ages. He thinks that one should bear in mind this important fact if one desires to understand the religious movement of the ages and the gradual development of religious thought. This helps us in evaluating correctly the spiritual development of mankind. Therefore, feeling and desire are the primary motive forces of all human endeavour and creation. The feeling and desire may present themselves in crude forms or they may assume an exalted form of expression and manifest themselves through high ideals and ideas. But.

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6. Ibid, p. 9.

7. Ibid, p. 24.

what are the special feelings and needs that have led humanity to religious thoughts and beliefs?

Einstein observes that the most varying emotions preside over the birth of religious thoughts and experiences. He envisages three main stages of development through which the evolution of religion has taken place. Religion has reached its culmination in the cosmic religious feeling or consciousness. The three stages of religion are primitive, social or moral and cosmic. In other words, religion has passed through primitive and social stages to reach consummation in the cosmic religious feeling or consciousness ultimately. Even today there are the primitive religion of fear, the social or moral religion and the cosmic religion.

As the feeling and desire have been at the roots of every human endeavour and creative work—so the birth of primitive religion can be directly traced to these complex and varying emotions of men seeking fulfilment and shunning misfortune. But the immediate cause of the primitive religion is the fear from the destructive forces of nature. Einstein says—"With primitive man it is above all fear that evokes religious notions—fear of hunger, wild beasts, sickness and death".<sup>8</sup> The origin of fear, according to him, is the ignorance of the law of causality that governs the world of phenomena. The primitive man replaces the laws and phenomenal elements by the spirits and forces of his imaginations and thinks the phenomenal process to be the manifestation of these spirits and powers.

The human mind at this stage creates for itself more or less analogous spirits and powers whose will and action determine the events and expressions of nature. The primitive man thus endeavours to propitiate the spirits of

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8. Ibid, p. 24.



his imagination by offerings and actions according to old traditional primitive ways and means to gain favour and earthly prosperity—to triumph over evils and natural and physical calamities. The acts of the primitive man towards these spirits are ultimately motivated by the desire for the fulfilment of necessity and assuagement of pain. The primitive religion gradually helps the formation of a priestly class of people who act as the mediators between the people and their spirits and powers. The primitive religion to some extent is stabilised by the formation of the priestly class. This process gradually builds a hegemony of this priestly class on the basis of fear. In many cases (where there is no separate priestly class) the social or political leaders combine priestly function with secular authority in order to make the latter more secure and permanent. In many cases the political leaders and the priestly people combine and jointly function for their mutual benefit and interest.

The second stage in the religious consciousness is the development of the social religious feeling which gives a concrete form to the vague factors of religion. Einstein says—"The social feelings are another source of the crystallisation of religion".<sup>9</sup> The origin of the social religious feeling is the realisation of human mortality and fallibility, the limitation and weakness of men and leaders of societies. Men are subject to errors and limitations; men are often overcome by unforeseen forces and calamities, over which they have no control. So to circumvent these forces and issues beyond their control and power they seek the guidance and support, love and sympathy from unseen and supermundane Being. Einstein says—"The desire for guidance, love and support prompts men to form the social or moral conception of God".<sup>10</sup>

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9. Ibid, p. 25.      10. Ibid, p. 25.



They long for reliance on some power or entity beyond the world of space and time and causation so that they may prosper and survive with its help and protection. This yearning for unearthly help and the realisation of human fallibility act as the incentive to form the social or moral conception of God. He says—"This is the God of Providence who protects, disposes, rewards, and punishes.....".<sup>11</sup> Here God is conceived as the dispenser of immortality and helper in sorrow and suffering. God, according to the depth of the believer's outlook, loves and cherishes the life of the tribe or of the human race. God is conceived as the preserver of human souls after death—as the source of comfort in times of misfortune and frustration.

Here we witness the translation of religion from the domain of fear to the realm of social morality. And this development, Einstein observes, is a great step in a nation's life. Yet it would be wrong to hold that the primitive religion is exclusively based on fear and the social religion is essentially based on social morality. They represent special and prominent types of religion and the only difference between the two is that in the higher level of social life the religion of morality predominates. In other words, both the forms of religion possess in some measure the characteristics of both. For example, in the religion of morality the elements of fear still persists to a certain extent. Einstein thinks that in the religion of morality factors are not self-evolved but are forced upon man by the fear of punishment and joy of reward by an anthropomorphic God. The anthropomorphic concept of God is common to both the forms of religion—the primitive and the social.

God is here conceived in the image of man. Men of

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11. Ibid, p. 25.



social religion visualise God as the manifestation of earthly father magnified and divinised to a great extent. The deified father is God. In the primitive religion the spirits have hardly taken the human forms though the process is beginning to be active. In the social religion the religious elements assume bigger dimension and become definitely a co-hesive, social force binding men and women of similar faith into a common social organism. The religious ideas also emerge from the fog of primitive era to take more or less clearcut and systematic proportion and form. Yet the basic elements that inspire the social religious feeling in man remain almost the same namely, the desire for fulfilment of necessity and the assuagement of pain.

Einstein characterises the religions of the cultured people of the world as the religion of the social morality. He thinks that the religion of morality is always a dominant force in all higher social life. He also admits that there are intermediate types of religion in between the religion of fear and the religion of morality. But in all of them God is conceived in the image of man and few persons can go beyond this conception of the formal God.

The third and final stage of religious development or experience is called by Einstein "the cosmic religious feeling". He writes—"But there is a third state of religious experience which belongs to all of them, even though it is rarely found in a pure form, and which I call cosmic religious feeling".<sup>12</sup> This feeling is inherent in all persons and in all forms of religion in potential or explicit form. The beginnings of the cosmic religious feeling appear in early stages of religious development. It is found in rudimentary forms in both primitive religion and social religion. In the utterances and experiences of the great prophets and

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12. Ibid, p. 26.



religious geniuses and exceptionally developed persons the cosmic religious feeling finds its fullest manifestation.

The concept of cosmic religion is very difficult to conceive and explain as there is no anthropomorphic conception of it. It is very difficult to explain to others who do not possess to a certain measure this universal feeling or experience. Hence the idea is very mystical to those who have no notions of this feeling. It has no corresponding concept of anthropomorphic God. The persons of exceptional ability and calibre who are in thought able to transcend the concept of personal God can only comprehend this cosmic religious feeling.

The realisation of the cosmic religious consciousness can only spring from the realisation of the utter vanity and futility of the selfish individual desires and aims. The precondition of this great and rare feeling is the pure contemplation of the immensely sublime and ordered operations of the physical phenomena and the depth and richness of human thought, wisdom and creation. Einstein says—"The individual feels the nothingness of human desire and aims and the sublimity and marvellous order which reveal themselves both in nature and in the world of thought".<sup>13</sup> The feeling of insignificance of the isolated personality, the awe and veneration which the majesty of vast nature and thought as a whole rouse in us are the necessary preconditions to the universal religious feeling. Here the individual being strives to break the chain of narrow egotism that binds him to identify himself with the entire universe of men and nature and to experience the creation as a significant whole and harmonious unity. He looks upon his limiting individuality as a prison and longs to experience the totality of creation as a single organic and purposive unity.

13. Ibid, p. 26.



The religious geniuses of all ages and lands have experienced such vast and cosmic, unifying and elevating religious feeling which has neither dogma nor God conceived in the image of man. By such religion no church can be established—no central and fixed teaching can be evolved. It has nothing to do with the priestly class or rules and regulations or religious ceremonial and observances. Einstein writes—"Hence it is precisely among the heretics of every age that we find men who were filled with the highest kind of religious feeling and were in many cases regarded by their contemporaries as atheists, sometimes also as saints".<sup>14</sup> Einstein declares that this cosmic religion is beyond the domain of formal God.

In his conception of the cosmic religion the universal causation is the dominant element, for Einstein believes in the uniform law of causality governing matter and mind. He visualises the entire world-structure as the rational entity which exhibits intelligence and reason of superior type. The universe is to him a unified pattern of matter and mind full of grandeur and profound beauty. Therefore, according to him, the entire universe in space and time represents the entire reality and the totality of existence which is yet to be fathomed and known and which is still enveloped in the mantle of mystery. Einstein characterises the full or partial realisation or the intense selfless yearning to understand this universal reality and its hidden truth, beauty and goodness as the cosmic religious feeling or consciousness.

The very process of realisation brings about the annihilation of selfish desires and egoistic aims and aspirations, transforms and universalises the ardent aspirant. In cosmic religion man of superior type rises above the compulsion

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14. Ibid, pp. 26-27.

of the religion of fear and the oppressive influence of personal God of the social religion, who punishes and rewards. In cosmic religion the motive force which presides over the birth of religious experience is not the desire for fulfilment of personal desires and cessation of pain and misfortune. Here alone man shakes off the shackles of narrow, isolated and personal cravings and longing and is initiated into the harmonious unity of the whole. Here alone is discovered the common platform of science and religion; and the relation of science and religion here becomes possible and relevant.

## V

Einstein says—"We thus arrive at a conception of the relation of science to religion very different from the usual one".<sup>15</sup> When one views the relation between religion and science from historical view-point one tends to envision science and religion as irreconcilably hostile to each other; and the reasons are obvious. The scientists who are thoroughly convinced of the universal operation of the law of causality cannot entertain the idea of a God who interferes in the course of natural events and operations. So a scientist has no need for the primitive religion of fear or the social or moral religion.<sup>16</sup> The scientist or science has nothing to do with these kinds of religion. To the scientist the human actions are motivated by internal and external necessity; necessity is the determining force compelling men to work and think. So men cannot be held responsible in the eyes of God. Einstein says—"... a man's actions are

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15. Ibid, p. 27.

16. Einstein's concept of "social morality or religion" should not be confused with the general understanding of the term from idealistic position.



determined by necessity external and internal, so that in God's eyes he cannot be responsible any more than an inanimate object is responsible for the motions it goes through".<sup>17</sup>

We have already seen that from philosophical viewpoint Einstein does not believe in indeterminism; he is a rigid determinist. This view of his is not contradictory to the concepts of religion; the presupposition of religion is the eternal harmony and law; religion does not visualise the universe as the domain of random, blind and fortuitous forces. In other words, religion does believe in determinism so far as the world is concerned. It holds that law is operating in the universe of space and time. Therefore, to religion the universe has a deep meaning, a steadfast mission, an underlying reason of supreme value and beauty. The universe in this sense naturally manifests a deep and abiding rationality and determinism. It exhibits the vision and operation of profound reason. Einstein writes—"Any man who looks forward in the darkness of night to the day light a few hours hence, or who believes that the snow-covered wheat-field will yield a golden harvest the following summer is no atheist. He has faith in an orderly principle though he may quibble over a name".<sup>18</sup>

Einstein maintains that a perfect system or organisation presupposes a perfect principle or law for its explanation. Hence to Einstein the universe is not a product of chance but the result of an ordered creative process. He holds that something exists and its laws are immutable. He feels that the extreme harmony of natural laws reveals an intelligence of such superiority that compared with it all the systematic thinking and intellection of man are utterly an insignificant

17. Ibid, p. 27.

18. Quoted by Dr. N. K. Brahma in Science And Causality, p. 68.



affair. Lastly, Einstein boldly declares—"I believe in God .....who reveals Himself in the orderly harmony of the universe. I believe that intelligence is manifested through all nature. The basis of scientific work is the conviction that the world is an ordered and comprehensible entity and not a thing of chance".<sup>19</sup>

The sublime order which the universe unfolds is inherent in the universe itself. It cannot be traced to the working of the mind of the scientist who tries to unravel the mystery of creation. Einstein says that the physicist is astonished to notice how sublime order gradually emerges from what appeared to be a medley of chaos at first. And this order is inherent in the universe itself and it cannot be traced back to the mind of the enquiring scientist. In the language of Einstein it is "inherent in the world of perception".<sup>20</sup> Here he refutes the theory of some materialists who hold that the reason which is found is not inherent in matter but projected into the matter by the enquiring scientist. Again Einstein says—"The great scientists of all centuries of our civilisation have paid tribute in some measure to the power or principle back of the universe—the titanic First Cause which still mothers creation." The above passages and visions can only come from the mind of a deeply religious person.

Now we come back to the issue of the relation of science to religion. So when there is no responsibility towards an unseen Being so far as the human actions and thoughts are concerned the question of fear and punishment, joy and reward involving the element of social morality does not arise at all. Science has taken this attitude and

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19. Quoted by Dr. Bhagaban Das in *The Essential Unity Of All Religions*, pp. 19-20.

20. Quoted by Sir James Jeans in *Physics And Philosophy*, p. 183.



so it has been maintained that science has in this way undermined the authority of religion and force of morality. But Einstein thinks that the charge has been unjustly laid at the door of science. He feels that man's ethical behavior can be effectively grounded on sympathy, education and social ties. No religious basis in the popular sense of the term is necessary for the functioning of ethics of conduct. The conception of moral religion involving responsibility by compulsion and the idea of the personal God have no meaning or efficacy to the scientist or science.

We must here clearly understand what Einstein exactly means by the term "social religion of morality" otherwise misunderstanding is bound to confound us. Firstly, we should not confuse his interpretation of the term with the general idealistic interpretation of the same. By moral or social religion he means firstly, a religion based on compulsion—a religion whose laws are forced upon man by the fear. Secondly, man is compelled to obey the laws which have been imposed on him arbitrarily and forcefully, by a Being of imagination called God. Thirdly, this religion has come into being by the desire for fulfilment of necessity and assuagement of pain. Fourthly, this religion is ultimately based on ignorance and superstition. Let me sum up the position clearly.

Einstein identifies moral or social religion with fear of punishment by a God and joy of reward by Him. He means here that the scientist has no need of morality which is imposed upon man by the force of fear of punishment and by the charm of reward. He deprecates this type of low morality and religion of compulsion and threat. So when he condemns such religion or morality he has in mind this type of religion or morality. He says—"Man would indeed be in a poor way if he had to be restrained by fear of



punishment and hope of reward after death".<sup>21</sup> This sentence clarifies his whole position in this issue. He rightly derides a religion which restrains man with the whip of punishment and temptation of future rewards. In other words, such religion is not true religion at all because true religion, we all know, has nothing to do with such arbitrary measures. The religious temper is definitely opposed to methods of compulsion, temptation and ignorance. All living and great religions of the world, all great saints and prophets—all essential scriptures have openly and clearly condemned the things which pass sometimes in the name of religion. Einstein has done the same thing in different language and terms, and in doing so he has the definite backing of all religions of the world.

But Einstein does not deprecate true universal religion or the free, cosmic morality arising out of free, creative spirit of men. We must also remember in this context the remark of his that the cosmic religion is to be found in all religions of the world; at times the vision of true religion is hidden or vague, distorted or implicit, but all the while the vision and essence of it are there and they pervade all forms of religion including the cosmic religion envisioned by Einstein. Einstein thinks that man's works and thoughts should be developed in man by a natural and spontaneously free process. His moral ways and aims should proceed from his free conscience and come into being through a process of self-evolution. That is, the factors of morality and ethics of man should not be thrust upon him by a Being without or by a religion of fear and ignorance. They should be the unforced flowers of his own being—the result of his own free volition in the light

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21. The World As I See it, p. 27.



of his essential nature. The factors should be self-evolved, created and formed within by the spontaneous development of manhood through educational and other training. This stand of Einstein, again, is in perfect conformity with the stand of religion in this issue. Religion also believes in the value and freedom of the self or soul. It thinks that moral nature or spiritual or ethical element is the inherent essence of every soul and the soul of man is perfectly capable of developing the factors of ethics and morality without the compulsion of fear and joy of future rewards. Therefore, science does not undermine the value and efficacy of true religion and the value of ethics, morality and spirituality. And these values return to religion with added richness and depth in the form of cosmic religious feeling or consciousness. The cosmic religion as outlined earlier serves as the perennial incentive to all scientists for all scientific researches and works, inventions and discoveries. Einstein says—"I maintain that cosmic religious feeling is the strongest and noblest incitement to scientific research".<sup>22</sup>

The cosmic religion universalises the outlook of the scientist and destroys all longings for selfish aspirations and aims for personal gain and fame and name. The scientist draws inspiration from the abiding conviction that the universe has a rationality of its own—that it manifests the marvels of reason far superior to human reason. All scientists do their work with a firm conviction that the world is a well-ordered and comprehensible unity and not a thing of chance. The life-long devotion to scientific work, the ceaseless endeavour and self-sacrifice, the untiring pursuit after materially unrewarding knowledge are

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22. Ibid, p. 28.



sustained by a faith that reason and harmony reign supreme in the world and by a philosophy of life and profound vision and understanding arising out of the cosmic religious feeling. The scientist gives up his personal ambitions and hopes to realise and experience to some extent, if not fully, the sublime beauty, truth, goodness, reason, mystery of the reality. And in this perspective science and religion become relevant, necessary and rewarding to each other.

The theoretical science demands from the scientist immense effort and devotion, self-sacrifice and self-dedication for the cause of the advancement of science and knowledge for the welfare of humanity. His work is remote and abstruse and it is cut off from the realm of immediate results and realities; it has no possibility of immediate gain; it has no secular advantage of its own for the scientist. Therefore, those who undertake such remote and materially profitless work are inspired by a deep and abiding emotion of religion—by noble ideals for the welfare of all—by a persistent resolution to know reality and to advance the horizon of knowledge. Such scientists are guided by the immortal thirst for knowledge and truth—by the fire and zeal of the spirit of service and dedication. In this way it becomes possible for them to spend countless hours in solitary work and research to disentangle the principles of phenomena and other things in space and time.

Einstein thinks that those who enjoy the fruits of the labour of the scientists often think wrongly of the mentality of the scientists. But there is no denying the fact that such selfless scientists and prophets, saints and visionaries belonging to diverse times and climes have shown the way to mankind. He says—"Only one who has devoted his life to similar ends can have a vivid realisation of what has inspired these men and given them the strength to remain



true to their purpose in spite of countless failures. It is the cosmic religious feeling that gives a man strength of this sort".<sup>23</sup> He also remarks that it has been rightly said that in this materialistic and atheistic age only the real scientists are profoundly religious.

Einstein declares that every profound scientist has a peculiar religious feeling of his own. But this feeling is naturally different from "the religion of the naive man". He maintains that the scientist's religion "takes the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of the natural law....this feeling is the guiding principle of his life and work in so far as he succeeds in keeping himself from the shackles of selfish desires. It is beyond question closely akin to that which has possessed the religious geniuses of all ages".<sup>24</sup> Therefore, true universal religion and science are not hostile to each other but are complementary and mutually interlinked. Both are necessary for the welfare of humanity as a whole. And to express precisely the union of science and religion as envisaged by him Einstein says—"Science without religion is lame—religion without science is blind."

Einstein maintains that the universe of Reality stands shrouded in mystery for the scientist, for he has not yet fully penetrated the vast realm of reason and profound beauty that inform it. The feeling of mystery profound persists and the existence of a reality yet to be known and fully fathomed inspires the scientist with an exultant emotion and fleeting glimpse of the knowledge of the reality. This emotion which the gigantic presence of entire creation enveloped in mystery rouses, constitutes one of the basic factors of the cosmic religion. In this sense alone Einstein

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23. Ibid, p. 28.

24. Ibid, p. 29.

professes to be a deeply religious person, for he is the ardent worshipper at the alter of the enigmatical mystery of the universe.

The experience of the mysterious is the fairest experience possible to man. He says—"The fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. He who knows it not and can no longer wonder, no longer feel amazement, is as good as dead, a snuffed-out candle".<sup>25</sup> He thinks that this experience of the mysterious has been the origin of religion. He says—"It was the experience of the mystery—even if mixed with fear that engendered religion".<sup>26</sup> The wonderful creation around us, the radiant forms of nature, the enveloping mystery and glow of reason, the rudimentary knowledge which the universe of beauty and reason rouses in us present to us a panorama of everlasting mystery. He says in his own beautiful language—"A knowledge of the existence of something we cannot penetrate, of the manifestations of the profoundest reason and the most radiant beauty, which are only accessible to our reason in their most rudimentary forms—it is this knowledge and this emotion that constitute the truly religious attitude; in this sense and in this sense alone, I am a deeply religious man".<sup>27</sup> He does not believe in a God who rewards and punishes or "has a will of the type of which we are conscious in ourselves."

Einstein feels that man is afraid of death because he blindly clings to feeble egoism. But he has no such fear of death and has no longing for personal immortality. He writes—"Enough for me the mystery of eternity of life, and

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25. Ibid, p. 5.

26. Ibid, p. 5.

27. Ibid, p. 5.



the inkling of the marvellous structure of reality, together with the single-hearted endeavour to comprehend a portion be it never so tiny, of the reason that manifests itself in nature".<sup>28</sup>

The experience of the mysterious of which Einstein speaks so highly and which, according to him, constitutes one of the basic factors of true religious consciousness, is common to all higher religions and religious experience of all lands and times. The sense of the mysterious—the awe and wonder before the mighty presence of the reality and the feeling of profound emotion have been the fundamental elements of all world-religions. The feeling of the mysterious is called by Rudolf Otto the "deepest and most fundamental element in all strong and sincerely felt religious emotion." He calls this emotion or feeling "mysterium tremendum."

In speaking about the experience of the mysterious Einstein simply echoes the essential emotion of all religions of the world. He rightly says—"The most beautiful and profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the power of all true science....To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms—this knowledge, this feeling is at the centre of true religiousness".<sup>29</sup> This feeling of the mysterious can hardly be logically ascertained or evaluated; its essence can only be felt or experienced; for it is the reaction of the soul "in the presence of that which is a Mystery inexpressible and above all creatures".<sup>30</sup> The above expression (of

28. Ibid, p. 5.

29. Quoted by L. Barnett in *The Univedse And Dr. Einstein*, p. 1.

30. *The Idea Of The Holy*, p. 13.

Einstein) can only come from a man who is deeply religious in his own inimitable way and who has drunk deep of the wisdom and of mystic vision and understanding of infinite reality. Creation is to him not a fortuitous play of blind forces; it has inherent intelligence and reason; it is alive with radiant beauty and living freedom of reason and the charm of a nameless mystery.

Einstein feels that true art and science can keep alive and propagate the cosmic religious consciousness which is capable of doing great things for mankind. He says—"In my view, it is the most important function of art and science to awaken this feeling and keep it alive in those who are capable of it".<sup>31</sup>

## VI

Einstein observes that modern era and its impressive and many-sided achievements have ceaselessly worked for the perfection of the means. Today we have the perfection of the means but the confusion of the ends. It is true that means cannot do anything if the ends are vague and undefined. The perfection of ends depends upon the perfection of man intellectually, spiritually and morally. So long as man clings unto selfishness and petty individuality there cannot be any clear and propitious vision of the ultimate goal of all-round improvement so far as the humanity and the world are concerned. It is imperative, therefore, that man should rise above the individuality and narrowness for the good of all. This is only possible not by knowledge or the intellectual excellence but by the process of training in renunciation and selfless service to humanity.

Therefore, the fate of humanity today does not depend

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31. *The World As I See It*, p. 27.



on secular wealth or material advancement alone but on the true moral growth and strength. The greatest scientist of this age declares—"That is why I began by telling you that the fate of the human race was more than ever dependent on its moral strength today. The way to a joyful and happy state is through renunciation and self-limitation everywhere".<sup>32</sup> This is the lesson of history; this is the central teaching of all religions; this is the cardinal and eternal message of all saints and seers, prophets and thinkers, philosophers and mystics. We have at our disposal the most valuable gift on earth to make life free and beautiful. And that gift is the moral or spiritual strength of the soul of man. On its development alone rests the possibility of the utilisation of the tremendous achievements of science. So in the language of Einstein the ethical postulate in support of peace and prosperity has become today a vital question of life and death of nations, owing to the inventions of terrible weapons of war, which are capable of destroying the whole creation in no time. So it is the moral duty of every one to uphold peace and spiritual values of life.

Man must overcome personal egotism and also the national or class or racial egotism. By reaching such a height can a man contribute towards improving the lot of humanity. So great effort is necessary—moral, intellectual and spiritual, if the legacy of humanity is to prove a blessing and not a curse. Einstein again declares—"The true value of a human being is determined primarily by the measure and the sense in which he has attained liberation from the self".<sup>33</sup> Only a man of profound religious feeling can say this. Every religion tells us that the bondage of

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32. Ibid, p. 46.

33. Ibid, pp. 7-8.

self is the main cause of human degradation and the liberation from the self means spiritual salvation or religious enlightenment.

Einstein feels that scientists have special function and mission in this world. So the scientists should not only co-relate the date of research and experiment and observation but also try to bring law and harmony in the domain of wisdom and knowledge. The scientists should be given the unconditional liberty for the pursuit of knowledge. The pursuit of scientific truth must be detached from the practical interest of everyday life. Einstein defines science as the "attempt at the posterior reconstruction of existence by the process of conceptualisation".<sup>34</sup> The process of conceptualisation belongs necessarily to the domain of philosophy. Thus science is closely related to philosophy. The following words of Einstein are of great significance today though they are addressed to the Jewish people—"History has given us a difficult row to hoe; but so long as we remain devoted servants of truth, justice, and liberty, we shall continue not merely to survive....but by creative work to bring forth fruits which contribute to the ennoblement of the human race".<sup>35</sup>

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34. Out Of My Later Years, p. 24.

35. The World As I See It, p. 90.



## CHAPTER XII

### ALDOUS HUXLEY ON RELIGION



*Beliefs—Ethics—Functions Of Religion—Religious Experience And Religious Life.*

"As I have gone on, religion has come to take a more and more prominent place till in the end it stands in the centre of the picture. I have come back to believe that religion holds the key to the mystery of existence."

"The only motive for reviving religion that has any chance of bringing religion back to life is a sincere and disinterested thirst for religion for its own sake, and not for any incidental secular consequences. We may hope and pray that, with the help of God's grace, this pure thirst for religion for its own sake may well up again in our heart;"

—Arnold. J. Toynbee—

#### I

The human beings have hunger and thirst for explanation of everything around them. The human mind seeks to comprehend the identity behind diversity, the unity behind the variety. Huxley writes that according to Myerson's phrase science is the education of diversity to identity. And nature seems to satisfy the craving of the mind for investigation and reveals the fact that identity underlies diversity. Science has reduced the diversity of the material world so far as such education is possible to an

ultimate identity. Huxley says—"The material universe is pictured by science as composed of a diversity of patterns of a single substance".<sup>1</sup>

In the light of this discovery man physically is the locus of a continuous process of chemical changes. He is conditioned by his neighbourhood to the earth and various forces and laws connected with the world. Mentally he is related to and conditioned by "the minds of his contemporaries and predecessors". Hence man is not an independent or concrete "existent". He is related to and conditioned by the whole material and mental world. Therefore, Huxley observes that the concept of separate, individual existents is the illusion of the common-sense. He says—"Scientific investigation reveals that concrete reality consists of the interdependent parts of a totality".<sup>2</sup> Science has made it clear that the realm of sense experience and common-sense is only a small part of the realm of the total reality

Every man is compelled to live in a given, limited world of his own. So the realm in which we have our daily life is a small one in comparison to the total universe. Yet man by his well-developed intellectual faculties is able to infer the existence of the larger world "enclosing his private universe." The scientific picture of mind is inadequate, incomplete and less clearly outlined; hence any dogmatic or absolute view about the realm of mind or soul involves the possibility of contradiction. Ultimately, Huxley observes that all science is based upon an act of faith—faith in the efficacy of mind as the instrument of knowledge. He writes—"All science is based upon an act of faith—faith in the validity of the mind's logical pro-

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1. *Ends And Means*, p. 254.

2. *Ibid*, p. 255.



cesses, faith in the ultimate explicability of the world, faith that the laws of thought are the laws of things".<sup>3</sup>

The evolutionary progress has been on the whole genuine and valuable. But evolutionary advancement is of two kinds, general all-round progress and one-sided progress towards a particular direction. The latter leads to specialisation; specialisation among the lower types of creature has always led to inveteracy and extinction. Only the human species has kept itself free from specialisation and thus has been able to maintain its progress in all directions. Man is also in a position to advance from his present standard; yet he can advance if he fulfils certain conditions. The first condition is that an organism should advance along the entire biological front; specialisation is inconsistent with genuine progress. But competition between the members of the same species (which Huxley calls 'intraspecific competition') leads invariably to specialisation. This type of competition should be reduced to a minimum. The second condition involves the temper of co-operation. Real progress of mankind is possible when men are not combative but inclined to work together on the basis of mutual co-operation. The third condition is the proper functioning of the intelligence. Intelligence in order to be really effective must be freed from the influence and interference of emotions, impulses and emotional sensations.

In this connection we should remember that there is a great deal of difference between scientist's abstract, generalised universe and the private universe of things and the world we actually live in—a world that is given to our senses and intuitions of beauty and goodness, our emotions and impulses, our modes of thought and sentiments.

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3. Ibid, p. 258.



Scientist's world is far from the reality which is really experienced by us, which contains value and significance, love and beauty, mystical delight and visions of God. Therefore, the ultimate reality should not be identical with the valueless, meaningless, measured and numbered world of science. For this false identification leads us to the false idea of the meaninglessness of creation. Huxley writes— "In the arts, in philosophy, in religion, men are trying to describe and explain the non-measurable, purely qualitative aspect of reality".<sup>4</sup>

Fortunately today some scientists have realised that they are incompetent to deal systematically with the moral values, religious experiences, intuitions of spiritual significance. This realisation has paved the way for the emergence of true conception of the relation between science and the total experience of humanity. But today the meaning has been re-introduced to the realm of reality only in patches by chauvinistic tendencies expressing themselves in theologies and nationalistic and evolutionary idolatry. The idea that a particular party or the class or the state or the nation is alone great, significant and valuable while others are insignificant and valueless is responsible for this. We should undo this evil. The entire universe and the whole human race must be visualised as deeply valuable and profoundly meaningful; then the entire reality will present a glorious spectacle of meaningfulness and abiding value.

The very human nature is such that it definitely refuses to accept the theory of the meaninglessness of reality. Many great mystics and philosophers are convinced that the world possesses meaning and value. Yet old traditional arguments in favour of theism such as teleological, ontological, cosmo-

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4. Ibid, p. 268.



logical, moral are ineffective today. Some of them, indeed, tend to satisfy us because we have craving for reducing diversity to identity and any theory pertaining to this seems to us to be intrinsically plausible. Science, religion, philosophy attempt to satisfy systematically our cravings for explanation in terms of theories. And the theories seem to be plausible because they postulate the presence of identity behind diversity. Huxley thinks that the craving for righteousness is just as fundamental as the craving for explanation. Yet the meanings and definitions of words such as 'good', 'virtue' constantly fluctuate according to different religions, races, and lands. And we should remember two things in this affair. Firstly, such judgments are passed by all human beings and the category of value is universally employed; secondly, the contents of the judgments of value passed by different persons always tend to approximate. Among the developed human beings the world over "there exists a real consensus gentium in regard to ethical first principles."

## II

Huxley holds that the fundamental propositions boil down to the following: Good is that which makes for unity; evil is that which makes for separateness.<sup>5</sup> In other words, the separateness is attachment to selfishness and unity is non-attachment to selfishness. Non-attachment to personal interest leads to unity of all being. One can attain unity with God and through God unity with the rest of humanity and creation through the cultivation of self-sacrifice and selflessness. Good and evil exist side by side in the spheres of body, emotion and intellect; these spheres are inseparably interrelated. Events of one sphere have their

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5. Ibid, p. 303.



counterparts in the events of another sphere. Thus physical, emotional and intellectual phenomena are interrelated. For instance, physical health is necessary for spiritual well-being and self-transcendence; pain of body naturally is an obstacle in the path of non-attachment. By pain or extreme pleasure body inclines towards separateness and identification of itself with it. So one must have good health to be really spiritually but one must also try to control the sex-impulse.

The awareness of good and evil "is the condition of any moral behaviour superior to that of animals". Huxley thinks that individual cannot transcend himself unless he first becomes conscious of himself and his relations with other beings and the world at large. And sexual continence is the pre-condition of this awareness; other forms of mental, conative, and emotional energy must also be conserved and preserved and controlled. So chastity is a major virtue because without it society lacks energy and individuals are left in perpetual unawareness, attachment to senses and animality. So also sloth, anger, envy, fear stand for animal separateness hence they should be overcome. We should remember that some vices are animal in nature; some are purely human. The most dangerous human vices are lusts, craving for power, social position and gain, pride, vanity and ambition.

The popular morality often tends to support lust for power or craving for social preeminence. So the salvation of the world is not possible until people come to know that the ambitious power-seekers and the infirmity of the noble minds are equally harmful for all. Huxley writes—"The human or spiritual vices are the most harmful in their results and hardest to resist".<sup>6</sup> One must always know

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6. Ibid, p. 320.



that goodness and good ends are attained only by the use of good means. Bad means always produces attachment and is intrinsically separative and it cannot produce unification which is the aim of all good means.

Yet without the popular and proper guide of intelligence ethical good is not fully attained or achieved. Intelligence is of two kinds. Intelligence may be the ability to deal with the events and things in the external world; and it may consist in "awareness of, and ability to deal with the phenomena of the inner world". And when two kinds of intelligence combine in a balanced personality for the harmonious function of actions and thoughts they produce maximum physical and spiritual well-being. Secular intelligence of the first type may produce brilliant thinkers, scientists, philosophers, statesmen but the second type of intelligence produces saints, prophets, mystics and spiritual souls of the highest order. Huxley writes—"The intelligent fool, who has no knowledge of, or control over himself, cannot achieve enlightenment so long as he remains what he is".<sup>7</sup> But an intelligent wise man is capable of doing so and he can help and elevate society to a higher level by his examples in life of restraint and high morality. Self-transcendence is possible through self-awareness and good is that which increases this awareness which is the door-way to all higher fulfilment and realisation.

Huxley holds that the greater part of the life of the majority of human beings is sub-personal because most of the human beings spend their times identified with thoughts and impulses, feelings and sensations. They are not aware of their inner essence and essential existence. Yet one can transcend this state and be on the personal level and thence

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7. Ibid, pp. 322-323.



to the super-personal level through mystic trainings and religious self-education. The super-personal state is rare and it entails "continuous intuitive relation with the impersonal principle of reality." Self-transcendence is possible through self-awareness; self-analysis, periodical analysis at the hands of others, habitual self-recollection, effort to resist temptations are some of the methods which should be applied for self-transcendence or God-realisation through self-transcendence. Self-awareness is God-awareness. Self-will is an obstacle; similarly the awareness of the existence of sin leads to the removal of the sin through effort and struggle.

False beliefs always lead to evil results and the true beliefs always lead to good result. It is a historical fact. Finally Huxley writes—"In life, ethics and metaphysics are interdependent. But ethics includes politics and economics; and whether ethical principles shall be applied well or badly or not at all depends on education and on religion in so far as it is a system of self-education".<sup>8</sup> He holds that—lead us not to temptation—must be the guiding principle of all social organisation.<sup>9</sup> In the realm of politics, he thinks that "the best antidote to nationalistic idolatry is a monothism with its corollary of monoanthropinism".<sup>10</sup>

### III

Huxley maintains that religion among many other things is primarily a system of self-education by means of which the human beings can train themselves. The religious training aims at making desirable changes in human personality and consequently in society at large. Secondly,

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8. Ibid, p. 329.

9. The Perennial Philosophy, p. 110.

10. Themes And Variations, pp. 258-259.



its aim is to heighten consciousness and thus to establish favourable and proper relation between the human beings and the world of which they are inseparable and significant parts. But though the aim of true religion is this often this noble aim is forgotten and unfortunately all the doctrines and practices of the existing religions are not calculated "to ameliorate character or heighten consciousness." Huxley maintains that the practices of existing religions have mainly three aspects. Firstly, a great deal of what is taught and performed in the name of religion is definitely and highly injurious to humanity. Secondly, a great deal more is ethically neutral; that is, it is neither good nor bad for humanity. Thirdly, some doctrines, ways and practices are salutary and edifying for all.

Under these circumstances Huxley thinks that it is the duty of the rational idealist to assume an attitude of uncompromising hostility "towards the kind of religion whose fruits are moral evil and a darkening of the mind".<sup>11</sup> All by-products of religion such as persecution, suppression and distortion of truth and inequality which are basically harmful and inequitable should be eliminated. These things of religion are positively pernicious—hence there cannot be any compromise here. But so far as ethically neutral religious customs, rites and particular practices of organised religions are concerned the rational idealist's attitude should be ascertained by the nature of their effectiveness on human society. That is, if they tend to maintain a favourable social pattern and facilitate and enrich the relation between man and man, between community and community then they should be accepted and encouraged by him under certain conditions. It is quite true that ritualism will not help man to

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11. Ibid, p. 225.



attain the highest form of spiritual development; yet it is equally true that all human beings do not desire such development; they are satisfied by the forms of ritualism, which go to satisfy their emotional and physical needs. Here the rational idealist will assume an attitude of toleration of ritualism so far as the majority of people is concerned. And in this connection it is logical and rational to favour that kind of ritualism which is not injurious but conducive to the welfare of human beings.

Almost all the historical founders and religious philosophers have divided human beings into a "minority of individuals, capable of making the efforts required to attain enlightenment; and a great majority incapable of making such efforts".<sup>12</sup> This conception is fundamental in almost all great religions. Most of the people the world over who are incapable of making the supreme effort to develop themselves to the limits of human capacity, ritualism is necessary and ennobling under certain conditions. For a few individuals of exceptional calibre who are so capable ritualism is not necessary; it is harmful and obstructing to them. So it is quite natural that there should be always two types of religion for two distinct types of people. This is a historical fact.

Huxley thinks that not all the magic, the liturgy, the ritual which still exist in the historical religions are the relics from primitive forms. A good deal of them is relatively new and the product of misunderstanding arising out of misinterpretation of actions and words of great persons by the erring beings. The mystic's symbolical and highly spiritual expressions and experiences are often crudely interpreted and strangely distorted into forms of

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12. *Ibid*, p. 226.



magic rites and alchemy. Huxley says—"Episodes, in the inner life were projected in a strangely distorted form into the outer world, where they helped to swell the majestic stream of primitive superstition".<sup>13</sup> In modern times the attempt to fabricate synthetic rituals has failed and new rituals and ceremonials which are devised from time to time have been short-lived. On the other hand, new rituals and ceremonials have come into being in connection with the cult of nationalism and socialism in this world.

Considering these instances we can reasonably conclude that "ritual and ceremonial will arise almost spontaneously wherever masses of people are gathered together for the purpose of taking part in any activity in which they are emotionally concerned".<sup>14</sup> Emotions give rise to rites and ceremonials and not vice versa as some would have us believe. Secondly, as ritualism is a fetter to which the majority of human beings is deeply attached, it is useless to work for its elimination for it would remain for ever. Thirdly, a rational idealist to counterpoise the evils of ritualism and to encourage its use for the good purposes should try to prevent it from deteriorating into a source of harmful results through argument, persuasion and satire.

Religion has thus mainly three aspects—harmful, neutral and benevolent. We have already seen what is Huxley's attitude towards the first two aspects. We now turn to his views on the positively benevolent aspect of religion. Speaking about the religious practices he says—"From the humanistic point of view, religious practices are valuable in so far as they provide methods of self-education, methods which men can use to transform their characters

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13. Ibid, p. 228.

14. Ibid, p. 229.



and enlarge their consciousness".<sup>15</sup> According to him, the aim of religion is self-education which is attained through physiological, emotional and contemplative methods.

The physiological methods of religious self-education are adopted by the most savage peoples and by the people belonging to higher religions. For example, the savage people and the people of higher religions make use of rhythmical movement repeatedly as a method of inducing unusual conditions of mind or consciousness. This rhythmic movement may assume various forms—from the solitary pacing of a monk reading his breviary to the ritual dances of the primitive people. This type of movement has much the similar effect as the repetition of verbal formulae. It stills the surface-consciousness and leaves the inner consciousness free either to meditate on God or to experience an abiding sense of unity with other human beings or with the presiding divinity. Huxley opines that particularly for men and women of somatotonic type ritual dances tend to provide religious experiences.

Another method of physiological process of religion is asceticism which includes fasting, sleeplessness, discomfort and selfmortification. This method is adopted by the followers of every religion to atone for sin, to train the will and to cleanse and modify the ordinary and everyday consciousness for spiritual illumination. The ascetics who train themselves and their bodies systematically can exercise full control over physiological processes of the body. In many cases their training leads them to profound mental and spiritual states through the modification of physical functions such as respiration, sexual function etc. These facts go to show that such practices may and can

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15. Ibid, p. 231.



produce very valuable results. Huxley holds that it is possible for a man to attain through these mental states arising out of the training complete non-attachment to "the things of the world" and simultaneously to gain attachment more fully than normal man to what Huxley calls "the integrating principle of all things."

Yet it is not easy though possible. The methods involve dangers and possibility of beneful effects in some cases when such ascetics are influenced by vanity, desire for eminence, and fame. Many a ascetic causes self-deterioration ultimately by such false and misleading desires. Some persons again break down mentally and physically sometimes under the severe strain of the difficult and prolonged training. A few ascetics may be able to attain their higher objects of spiritual quest. So under these circumstances the rational idealist should act on the principle that the tree is known by its fruits; in other words, he should judge the value pragmatically. Thus he would neither support extreme asceticism nor condemn the method which if rightly used can usher in profound, life-giving modification of physiological functions, which is good for spiritual enlightenment. He will approve the methods if they bear valuable fruits. He will also "not neglect any system of training which promises to increase, without danger the individual's conscious control of his organism".<sup>16</sup>

The emotional methods of self-education consist essentially in the cultivation of emotional relations between the devote and the personal God, or other divine elements. This emotion is innate in every being and predominant in a particular type of human beings. In India it is called the path of devotional faith as opposed to the path of duty or

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16. Ibid, p. 234.



work and path of knowledge. Speaking about the paths of liberation Huxley quotes approvingly from Sri Sankara the following passage—"Among all means of liberation, Bhakti or devotion is supreme. To seek earnestly to know one's real nature—this is said to be devotion. In other words, devotion can be defined as the search for the reality of one's own Atman".<sup>17</sup>

Huxley observes that in people of viscerotonic habit religious experience tends to assume spontaneously an emotional form. The emotional relation is naturally based on the personal relation between the worshipper and a personal God. The great mystics of every age and land have shown that the religious experience must ultimately end with the realisation of ultimate Godhead or Reality as impersonal. But those who persist through this emotional way to visualise God as a person cannot naturally go further towards the ultimate realisation of God as impersonal Absolute.

Moreover, they never try to undergo the arduous training which alone makes possible "the mystical union of the soul with the integrating principle of all beings." Therefore, in the ultimate point of view the path of devotional faith has limited value but nevertheless it produces often considerable results with great rapidity. That is, the emotional methods are visibly effective; they produce tremendous energy which changes the worshipper and thus the world around him to a great extent. But often this energy is not devoted to ethical works and spiritual realisation. Hence it is not always necessarily good either for man or for society at large. Sometimes it is directed to good ends, often it is directed towards ends that are silly,

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17. Time Must Have A Stop, p. 275.



mad or downright evil. Yet Huxley writes—"The dangers of bhakti-marga (the path of devotional or emotional faith) are manifest.....and they do nothing to lessen its attractiveness to human beings of a certain psychological type".<sup>18</sup> Objects of devotional faith may be various; they may be a personal God, an eternal, all-powerful God, the personified nation or class, the deified Leader and various other things.

In this affair the rational idealist has two main tasks, according to Huxley. Firstly, he should do his best to advertise the fact that physiological and emotional methods are not only methods available for religious self-education. He should point out the value of other methods and drive home the fact that there are alternatives to the path of emotion, or devotion. He should also point out that the false beliefs are often associated with the cult of bhakti; secondly, accepting as inevitable the existence of a large residuum of practices of this path he should do his best "to turn this irrepressible stream of (this path) bhakti into the channels in which it will do the least mischief".<sup>19</sup> Huxley points out that even transcendental idea of God may lead to oppression and persecution if God is conceived as a transcendent person rather than as a transcendent principle of integration of all things.

The first way of religious self-education is physiological; the second is emotional or devotional. Now we turn to the third way of religious self-education, which is called by Huxley the "meditative or contemplative method or way". This method is very prominent for two reasons; firstly, it has always greatly influenced the affairs of men historically; secondly, from metaphysical view-point it throws light on the nature of Ultimate Reality. The

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18. Ends And Means, p. 242.

19. Ibid, p. 245.



methods of meditation, Huxley maintains, have often been used in conjunction with the emotional and physiological methods. But the meditative way in its purest form is quite independent of both. This method can be adopted by the persons who are not extreme ascetics and also by the persons who do not believe in a personal God. Meditation is a fundamental element in the religious life of man; in religious experience too it is an essential factor. The acts of recollection or spiritual concentration are necessary for the highest mystical illumination. He says—"The function, then, of meditation is to help a man to put forth a special quality of will".<sup>20</sup> This special quality of will of man should be regarded as a fact of practical observation and experience. The fact of the quality of the human will in religious sense is experienced in various ways. Some believe it to be an act of divine grace which is imparted from the transcendental—non-individual source. Some think it to be something latent in the very soul of man.

Rites and ceremonies are fundamentally social activities; in particular the ritual is a kind of "emotional event which can give cohesion to great masses of people." So physiological and emotional methods may be practised either in groups or in isolation but the meditation is primarily practised in profound solitude alone by the individual. Rarely we find the act of group-meditation and it can prove successful only under certain, special and rare circumstances. Meditation is concerned with the super-rational will which is latent in all and is capable of actual manifestation. Huxley says—"Rites, sacraments, liturgies, all these belong to public worship.....what ritual is to public worship, spiritual exercises are to private devotion".<sup>21</sup>

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20. Ibid, p. 248.

21. The Perennial Philosophy, p. 314.



The spiritual exercises are private affairs and efforts of the aspirant to train the mind for the unitive knowledge of God. Those who do so make progress in the life of the spirit. They are devices mostly used by solitary individuals

#### IV

The religious life and experience find unique realisation through the process of meditation. We should remember that there is a close connection between human constitution and temperament on the one hand, and the kind and degree of religious life and knowledge on the other. It is not possible to change one type of temperament into another; for the temperament of a given physical constitution "can be modified only within narrow limits."

So in religion many attempts have been made to work out a classification-system in terms of which the human differences in tempers and capacities can be ascertained and described. In religion generally three ways are recommended for God-realisation for three types of human beings. The three ways are—the way of work, the way of knowledge and the way of devotion or emotion. Every man should follow the intrinsic law of his inner being and development and his essential nature in order to develop the experience and God-consciousness. And he at the same time should adhere to the law of universal righteousness and piety. This attitude gives man liberty to follow his own path to Godhead and religion and breeds universal toleration. Yet it is equally true that all persons cannot attain the supreme truth of God because though "all are called, but in any given generation few are chosen, because few choose themselves".<sup>22</sup> Huxley says—"Spiritual pro-

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22. Ibid, p. 177.



gress is through the growing knowledge of the self as nothing and of the Godhead as all-embracing Reality".<sup>23</sup>

The methods of meditative way have been used since the days of antiquity for acquiring knowledge about the fundamental nature of things and for establishing the communion between the soul and the integrating principle of all things and beings. Huxley calls the meditation the "technique of mysticism". Through its prolonged practice after due physical, mental and spiritual preparation one can attain transcendental consciousness or direct vision of and union with the spiritual reality which is within and without. But those who have no such supernatural experience can scarcely believe in the validity of such spiritual realisation. Such experience would seem to them to be subjective and illusory. Yet the possibility of such experience, Huxley maintains, can never be ruled out and everyone is potentially capable of having such experience if one is ready to undergo the difficult and prolonged training in mind and body. So such experience is possible and the possibility of its verification like any scientific factor should be accepted. Real training can change the nature of our experience; a man trained in intuition is always different from an average man of the world with natural and normal capacity.

Huxley observes that knowledge is the function of human being and a being can be profoundly modified to enhance the extensity and intensity of knowing by training. He says—"....it is clear that to some one who has trained himself in goodness, virtue is really blessedness, while to the life of the ordinary man....(virtue) seems a real torture".<sup>24</sup> He thinks that we are justified in ignoring most of the arguments by which non-mystics try to discredit the

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23. Ibid, p. 187.

24. Ends And Means, p. 288.



experience of the mystics or the religious persons. Speaking about the value of mysticism he writes—"Mysticism, which is the systematic cultivation of mental quietness, the deliberate and conscious pursuit of the serenest kind of happiness, may be most satisfactorily regarded as a rule of health".<sup>25</sup>

The real religious souls or the mystics of the highest order realise the Supreme Godhead as universal and impersonal. The perennial philosophy has always given fundamentally the same answer in regard to the nature of the ultimate Reality or God. The ground of all creation or existence is the spiritual Absolute and ineffable by human intellect. The Absolute is impersonal, universal, without attribute, quality and form. The Absolute Godhead has a personal aspect; God is both immanent and transcendent, the ground of the many and all—the soul within and the existence without. Huxley outlines the minimum working hypothesis about the nature of God for persons who are not inclined towards any organised church:

1. That there is a Godhead or ground, which is the unmanifested principle of all manifestation.
2. That the Ground is transcendent and immanent.
3. That it is possible for human beings to love, know and virtually, to become actually identified with the Ground.
4. That to achieve this unitive knowledge, to realize this supreme identity, is the final end and purpose of human existence.
5. That there is a Law or Dharma, which must be obeyed, a Tao or Way, which must be followed, if men are to achieve their final end.
6. That the more there is of I, me, mine, the less there

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25. *Jesting Pilate*, p. 191.

is of the Ground; and that consequently the Tao is a way of humility and compassion, the Dharma, a Law of mortification and self-transcending awareness.<sup>26</sup>

So it is possible to have mystical experience which is the direct intuition of ultimate Reality through systematic methods and training in recollection and meditation. Huxley calls the religious or spiritual life "the life of the spirit". Man has eternally advanced from animal eternity into time which is strictly the human world of memory and anticipation. Yet from the world of time one may take a leap into the limitless world of the timeless spirit. He says—"....and from time, if one chooses to go on, into the world of spiritual eternity, into the divine Ground".<sup>27</sup> The life of the spirit has neither memory nor anticipation, neither past nor future; it is a life here and now—not a life looked forward to or recollected. It is life in its spiritual essence—it is life out of time. This is the true religious life or consciousness and the constant recollection of God becomes possible in this life of the spirit. He observes that there are three ways to the Ground—in and through the soul, in and through the universe and "the third, best and hardest way is that which leads to the divine Ground simultaneously in the perceiver and in that which is perceived".<sup>28</sup>

Huxley writes—"At all times and in every part of the world, mystics of the first order have always agreed that this ultimate reality.....is essentially impersonal".<sup>29</sup> And this finding is in perfect accord with the discoveries of the majority of the world's philosophers. The mystics have

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26. Time Must Have A Stop, p. 289.

27. Ibid, p. 286.

28. The Perennial Philosophy, p. 69.

29. Ends And Means, p. 294.



also shown that through spiritual training individuals can transcend the limitations of personality and merge their consciousness into the universal, impersonal consciousness which is inherent in all personal consciousness. A man can free himself from his private, limited universe only by relieving himself from the biological pressure. And man is relieved from the biological pressure in two ways—from without due to the efforts of others and from within due to his own efforts. The former way makes him a member of a community which gives him protection against harmful forces of nature and makes it easy for him to supply his physical wants and necessities of life. The latter way is of self-education and self-training in dispassionateness, disinterestedness, self-control—in the constant cultivation of intellectual and spiritual curiosity.

Huxley observes—"Only the disinterested mind can transcend common-sense and pass beyond the boundaries of animal or average sensual human life".<sup>30</sup> The truly religious person or mystic reveals this non-attachment in the highest degree and so he is able to transcend ordinary limitations more fully than a scientist or a philosopher. The reality he discovers is supernatural and it gives him unending inspiration and power. Goodness leads to recollection and meditation which help the aspirant to attain oneness with the ultimate reality which is indescribable in the ordinary language. We generally fail to have our true relation with ultimate reality and through it with our fellow-beings because we are inclined to associate ourselves with the animal nature and urges and worldly affairs. It is true that we cannot completely ignore our animal self but it is surely unnecessary to give our full attention to it.

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30. Ibid, p. 297.



Goodness helps us to divert our attention from the animal nature to true self of ours. Recollection and meditation greatly help goodness in two ways—by producing a super-rational concentration of will and by making it possible for man to realise through direct intuition that man's private world is not identical with ultimate reality. Huxley writes—"Goodness, meditation, the mystical experience and the ultimate reality discovered in mystical experience are organically related".<sup>31</sup> Yet high morality and virtue are the essential pre-condition of religious experiences which are possible when the aspirant is free from wordly attachment and animal nature. He says—"....If I want as full knowledge of God as it possible for human beings to have, I must be as good as it is possible for human beings to be".<sup>32</sup>

The essential moral law tells us that we should have our unity with all beings. Hence our spiritual nature stands for unity and interdependence of all and our animal nature stands for separateness and selfishness, egotism and ego-centric independence. The evil in this world is unstable because of the moral order of the existence. Evil stands for separateness and self-destruction because the separateness leads to the latter. The self-destruction of evil may be sudden or violent or gradual; evil may also end in reformation or extinction but it is always degenerative.

The aim of religious life is salvation. There are various kinds of salvation—material, mental, intellectual, spiritual. Salvation is regarded in religion as deliverance out of "folly, evil, misery etc"; the true mystic or religious soul always regards salvation as deliverance "out of

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31. Ibid, p. 299.

32. Ibid, p. 299.



separate self-hood in time and into eternity as realised in the unitive knowledge of the divine Ground".<sup>33</sup> The aspirant is completely saved when he is free here and now. Complete salvation is conditional upon right belief, right will, right speech, right action, right means of living, right effort, right recollection and right contemplation. But there is basic difference between immortality and survival. He says—"Immortality is participation in the eternal now of the divine Ground; survival is persistence in one of the forms of time. Immortality is the result of deliverance".<sup>34</sup>

In religious life faith occupies a very prominent place. The word 'faith' has various meanings; faith in authority, faith in the possibility of a proposition yet to be realised, faith as synonym for trust, and faith in something which cannot be verified—for example faith in God. Faith in the first three senses of the word plays a very important part in our daily life and in pure and applied science. Huxley writes—"The fourth kind is the thing which is commonly called 'religious faith'".<sup>35</sup> Faith is at the root of all systematic thinking; religious faith also means trust in moral and spiritual reliability of the universe and finally the eternal life stands "in the knowledge of the Godhead—not in faith anything less than Godhead."

The word 'prayer' stands essentially at the centre of our religious life and experience. The word may mean four distinct things, namely petition, intercession, adoration and contemplation. Petition is the asking for ourselves something of material value; intercession is the asking of something on behalf of others; adoration consists of "acts of devotion directed towards God in his personal aspect or

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33. The Perennial Philosophy, pp. 231-232.

34. Ibid, p. 242.

35. Ibid, p. 269.



as incarnated in human form. "Huxley writes—"Contemplation is the condition of alert passivity in which the soul lays itself open to the divine Ground within and without, the immanent and transcendent Godhead".<sup>36</sup> Adoration is the act of a loving but still separate individual but contemplation signifies the state of union with the divine Ground of all things and beings. Huxley thinks that the highest prayer is most passive in character.

The hall-mark of religious preparation is suffering; the capacity to suffer arises when there is separation from an all embracing totality. When I am imperfect I become the very symbol of disunity and when I feel this I suffer. Suffering is the first incentive which forces the religious man to aspire for the unity within his own organism and unity with the divine Ground. And when the unity is attained there is the end of all sufferings for all time to come. Huxley says—"The goal of creation is the return of all sentient beings out of separateness.....which results in suffering, through unitive knowledge, into the wholeness of eternal reality".<sup>37</sup>

In religion, according to Huxley, the word 'truth' is used indiscriminately; mainly the word is used in three distinct senses. It is used as a synonym for a fact when it is said God is truth meaning God is the fundamental reality. Secondly, the phrase as "worshipping God in spirit and truth" has different sense. Here truth signifies direct apprehension of a spiritual fact. Thirdly, truth is used to mean the accepted meaning of the word. Here truth is used as the verbal symbol. This meaning of the word becomes apparent when we say: this statement is the truth.

We have already seen that according to Huxley deliver-

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36. Ibid, p. 251.

37. Ibid, p. 260.



ance means the freedom from the chain of time and the participation in the freedom of eternity. And this is possible through obedience and self-surrender to the eternal Nature or Things. Huxley says—"We have given free will, in order that we may will our self-will out of existence and so come to live continuously in a state of grace".<sup>38</sup> So all our actions should be directed to make ourselves passive "in relation to the activity and the doing of the divine reality". That is, we should destroy egotism and selfishness and attachment to worldly things to allow the divine to permeate our entire being. Thus we are free to mould our own destiny provided we make serious endeavour.

Showing the difference between good and evil from the absolute view-point Huxley writes—"Good is the separate self's conformity to, and finally annihilation in, the divine Ground which gives it being; evil, the intensification of separateness, the refusal to know that the Ground exists".<sup>39</sup> Therefore, the unitive knowledge of the divine Ground is the supreme good according to perennial philosophy. The above doctrine is perfectly consistent with the ethical principles and social utility. Huxley is of opinion that the true eternal fullness of life can only be attained by those who have deliberately given up "partial, separative life of craving and self-interest of ego-centric thinking, feeling, wishing and acting". The deliberate dying to self-inspired factors is necessary for it. Self-denial is means to an end; when ego-centric life is lost we save the spiritual part of our life which we share with the divine Ground. Huxley says—"The relationship between moral action and spiritual knowledge is circular, as it were, and reciprocal".<sup>40</sup>

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38. Ibid, p. 190.

39. Ibid, pp. 210-211.

40. Ibid, p. 129.

True culmination of spiritual life is contemplation or the direct and intuitive awareness of God. Action is means to this end. And the society is propitious to that extent that it renders contemplation possible for its members. It is true that the existence of minority of contemplatives is greatly beneficial for the society at large. Hence, according to Huxley the supreme goal of human life cannot be action; 'to die in harness' cannot be the summum bonum of human life. The spiritual union with the integrating principle of all things or God should be the highest end of humanity. The spiritual illumination should lead the aspirant to the realisation of Godhead in this very life.

To the modern philosophy and modern way of life to die in harness presents the philosophy of the highest order. Huxley thinks that this approach to life is basically wrong; it ignores the very dignity of the soul—the very destiny of human existence. The door of the highest form of contemplation and deliverance leading to the union of the aspirant and God is open unto all. But a few can attain it because a few only in any age venture into the sea of profound endeavour and spiritual illumination. And those fortunate few "become capable of perpetual inspiration and are made the instruments through which divine grace is mediated to those whose unregenerate nature is impervious to the delicate touches of the spirit".<sup>41</sup>

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41. Ibid, p. 345.



## CHAPTER XIII

### S. RADHAKRISHNAN ON RELIGION



*Need Of Religion—Essence Of Religion  
Religious Experience—Aim Of Religion  
God.*

“Man alone philosophises, and man is the only religious animal. The omnipresence of religion in the human race, often remarked on, however rude in origin and however gross the superstitions with which it is first associated, is a symbol of the step from the finite particulars of the senses to the universal of thought. It is the beginning of the quest of God, and the quest means that God is present in a new way in the creature that undertakes it.”

—A. Seth Pringle-Pattison—

#### I

S. Radhakrishnan is fully convinced of the need of religion in modern times. He holds that this century symbolises intense and rapid growth of intellectual activity and reason which are mainly directed to the realisation of material ends. Intellect and reason are victorious today because they have apparently given rise to immensely and immediately fruitful sciences and technology, machines and other inventions. This is an age of extreme outwardness, of economic prosperity and external endeavours, of secular emphasis and organisations. In the

intellectual sphere new experiments and ideas, new factors and ideologies are having their golden time. It is characteristically also an age of uncertainty, of insecure foundations of life; old values and standards are giving place to the new and apparently everything is in the melting pot of modernity. Insistent pressure of new knowledge on the old faiths and values, the perpetual tension of restless, unbalanced way of life and the transitive, formative forces that are operating on man, have thrown humanity out of equilibrium and harmony.

Therefore, in spite of our boasted nationalism and impressive achievements in many fields, in spite of our aesthetic, social, political, economic and other development, we are all haunted by restlessness; we all instinctively feel that we are lost and helpless. This deep sense of despair is due to the realisation that we have not yet found the fullness and message of our soul. The social distemper of our social life is traceable to the lag between our social institutions and the world purpose. The modern man is in a state of utter confusion. He has violently reacted to the old, traditional and dogmatic religions of the past. His intellectual maturity and logical understanding are in open conflict with the traditional views of theology. Radhakrishnan says—"Along with deep discontent with the standard forms of religion there is a growing seriousness about it.....The millions who neither dare to have a religion nor do without one are rushing hither and thither seeking direction".<sup>1</sup> Thus modern man is seeking to fulfil his spiritual and religious vacuum with various substitutes for religion such as, naturalism, atheism,

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1. An Idealist View Of Life, p. 82.



agnosticism, scepticism, humanism, authoritarianism, pragmatism, modernism etc.<sup>2</sup>

But Radhakrishnan maintains that these substitutes cannot for ever satisfy the deepest need and everlasting longing of humanity; because they do not take into account the inborn profundity, depth and essence of the soul. They seem to touch only the outer fringe of human need and craving of higher kinds. Every man has the "primal craving for the eternal and the abiding." It is true that modern men are not satisfied with the dogmatic, dictatorial religions of the past. It is equally true that today the modern man is between the devil of scientific, soulless intellectualism and the sea of inhibitory and orthodox religion. He is assailed by doubts and confused by the persistent helplessness of his position. Radhakrishnan points out that the random, insistent proving and the restless search and enquiry for some satisfying solution of the puzzle only go to show that the unbelief is impossible—that the profound need for true religion is as strong as ever. Adequacy of standard forms of religion may be called in question; forms of religion may be subject to change and modification and remain in many cases unedifying and uninspiring but the need for religion is there beyond the shadow of doubt. He says—"The world is passing through a period of uncertainty, of wordless longing, it wants to get out of its present mood of spiritual chaos, moral aimlessness and intellectual vagrancy".<sup>3</sup>

Today man's energy is exhausted in the pursuit of material necessities of life. Consequently man's development has been onesided and he has been, as it were, externalised and secularised by the process of coarsening

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2. Ibid, p. 62.

3. Contemporary Indian Philosophy, p. 265.



and cheapening of life.<sup>4</sup> He has become inseparable part of the material and objective universe. And his inner being remains untouched, undeveloped and neglected. In one word, it may be said that man's cultivation of spirit has suffered a setback in the sphere of modern living. Radhakrishnan shows that the exclusion of the essential element of spirit from the human is the primary cause of matter's supremacy which is oppressive to the free spirit of man. So secularism is the main weakness of this age; moreover our social life has given us means but has denied us the ends. Again, we should remember that when the fundamental laws of nature such as unity, coherence, respect for man are trampled upon the result is hatred, war, and utter confusion.

Therefore, man's salvation from the oppression of matter is only possible through constant cultivation of the spirit; and the cultivation of spirit is conditional upon the emergence of true religion and its untrammelled functioning. Radhakrishnan declares that the cause of the all-round unrest and the crisis of the soul is mainly owing to the absence of true religion. He thinks that the undying need for religion so far as humanity is concerned springs from a universal and basic fear that is in every human heart. It is the fear of nothingness—the fear born of realisation that after all life all by itself may mean nothing ultimately. Even aimless, random life needs some sort of dream or hope of reaching some vague destination. Speaking about this fear Radhakrishnan says—"When a man gets a feeling or a fear that after all life means nothing, leads nowhere, and at bottom no one is really necessary and nothing worth while he cannot live".<sup>5</sup>

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4. *Eastern Religion And Western Thought*, p. 107.

5. *Ibid*, p. 39.



Religion, he thinks, comes forward to assuage this supreme necessity and to give hope and a creed to man.

The old values have vanished but we do not see the emergence of new values—no sustained development of principles of deep convictions that are necessary for our harmonious development as human beings. Today the state mechanises the soul of ours; scientific civilisation, industrial way of life and intellectual heritage of modern life have miserably failed to deliver the goods. The terrible shock of failure is forcing man to fall back again on the eternal, life-giving bedrock of religion. The legacy of material, onesided civilisation is mental ill-health, spiritual chaos, intellectual barrenness, fruitless atheism, racial intolerance, political war and economic exploitation. Radhakrishnan says—"The collapse of a civilisation built on the audacities of the speculative doubt, moral impressionism, and the fierce and confused enthusiasms of races and nations need not dishearten us".<sup>6</sup> Radhakrishnan envisions the coming birth of a new age—an age of spiritual illumination and universal brotherhood—an age of the kingdom of the spirit. So he advocates the revival of true religious and spiritual and regenerative spirit in the highest sense of the term. He is certain that now the regard for spiritual values, universal love of truth and beauty, righteousness, justice, sympathy and sense of unity of mankind will and should save the world.

## II

In the language of Radhakrishnan religion "is the soul's attitude, response, and adjustment in the presence of the supreme realities of the transcendent order." He

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6. Ibid, p. 33.



defines religion in various ways because single definition of it is not possible and desirable for obvious reasons. Religion is definitely concerned with the spiritual aspect of life, which is a direct continuation of the universal divinity within and without. It is the total reaction of man's entire self to the totality of the supreme reality which is also identical with the self. In other words, religion postulates the identity of self with God; it presupposes the living, continuous connection between them. This connection is made manifest in religious consciousness of man. Religion is also rooted in the sense of the mystery of the unknown reality; yet it is based on the feeling of unity of mankind, for religion is the awareness of the unity of all being.

Our inner, spiritual life assumes a dynamic role in our religious life to establish a fruitful contact with the ultimate reality or God. Religion hence is an instrument in the hands of searching, enquiring man for his greater, cosmic self and reality.<sup>7</sup> The spiritual man fully realises his sad limitations as empirical and phenomenal being; but this realisation is only possible against the immense background of the unseen and the eternal. For man is the meeting place of the finite and infinite, of matter and spirit, of body and soul. His physical, mental and intellectual conditions force upon him the idea of limitation; he is conditioned by adjuncts only phenomenally but in the creative freedom of his soul he regains his basic unconditional self only to lose it again in the medley of externals of life. The glimpses of his free self rouses in man the religious fervour and longing and religion is nothing but the life-long endeavour of the aspirant to tear the veil of

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7. Ibid. p. 275.



limitations that have been imposed upon him to regain the permanent vision of the unconditional eternal. Thus religion involves an element of knowledge of reality or God; because without knowledge born of intuition religion is blind.

Religion is inevitably spiritual in content, nature and essence as it deals with the spiritual aspect of man. And because it is spiritual in essence it primarily consists of inner and personal element of life.<sup>8</sup> That is, its realisation may come from an intense inner way and realisation of life eternal. Hence true religion is bound to have a mystical and intuitive colouring—a vivid apprehension of the supreme and a self-dependent factor of spiritual enjoyment that flows from such living apprehension of the Real or God.<sup>9</sup> In the hour of illumination and enjoyment religion is essentially self-sufficient and independent of other factors of judgment and criteria. For it involves the spiritual joy and life for their own sake; so religion in true sense is autonomous and free in itself and does not depend for its reality on the activity of dogma or institution, creed or code. In the final analysis, religion is autonomous form of spiritual life and it should not be confused with mere intellectual, ethical, aesthetic activities. Similarly, social service, humanitarianism, fellowship and noble reformatory activities may be the indirect outcome of religious regeneration but they can never be equated with religion or religious sanctity or holiness or realisation.

Radhakrishnan takes the help of negative methods of description to safeguard the essence of religion. He observes that religion is not aughtness; that it, it has no

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8. *An Idealist View Of Life*, p. 88. See also his *My Search For Truth*, p. 11.

9. *Ibid*, p. 88.



binding of laws or directives. There is no question of 'should' here but there is feeling of 'isness',—a sense of living experience here and now. Secondly, religion is not obedience to theological doctrines or ritual observances. Thus true religion is different from formal, standard religion which commands from without—which forces on man the rigid compulsion of scriptural or ecclesiastical authority. Religion becomes dependent, conditioned and stagnant with the process of compulsion. Thirdly, it should not be confused with the factors of social reform. Social reform or philanthropic activity may be the indirect result of religious consciousness but it cannot be equated with religion. Social reform may take place without the guidance from religion; social reform may result from the activity of intellect or utilitarian motives and the intellect and motives may operate without any religious realisation. Fourthly, as I have remarked earlier, religion is not intellectual or ethical activity of soul for similar reasons. Fifthly, religion is neither mere consciousness of moral or other values nor a form of knowledge or philosophy. The consciousness of value may be a cold, detached intellectual apprehension—it is not the realisation of a thing but the theoretical idea of a thing or value. Religion is not a form of knowledge because it is dynamic realisation of a Being where knowledge, and the knower and the known are united—where the presuppositions of knowledge are overcome and transcended. The idea of a being is different from the essence of a being; knowledge knows God but religion transform us into God—makes us active participants of the divine bliss here and now. In religion the knowing of knowledge is transformed into Being of Being.

Philosophy is the synthetic concatenation of our



knowledge of the self, world and God while religion is the fulfilment of philosophy—the culmination of understanding in mystical vision of the Real. Speaking about the need of philosophy of religion Radhakrishnan observes that the philosophy of religion is religion come to understanding of itself. Philosophy of religion is an endeavour to rationalise, unify and systematise the phenomena of religious experience. Hence no philosophy of religion is possible without the religious experiences which give content to religion and to the philosophy of religion. Religion may, of course, imply a metaphysical view of life, world and God but it differs from metaphysics or philosophy in essence and content. Morality, ethics, codes of conduct may be the indirect outcome of its outward expression for religion often expresses itself through codes of high morality and ethics—through benevolent ideals and noble sentiments. But it is different from all these. Speaking about the distinction between religion and moral consciousness Radhakrishnan writes—“There is in it a mystical element, an apprehension of the real, and an enjoyment of it for its own sake which is absent in the moral consciousness”.<sup>10</sup> In moral consciousness we have the rigid distinction between right and wrong, virtue and vice, good and bad. Morality is concerned with conduct—with unshakable faith in the victory of goodness and righteousness. Religion has in it a unifying character which unifies all values and experiences of life into a mould of unity. All differences are lost here—all limitations that spring from partiality, finiteness and limitation are transcended because religion is not satisfied with “anything less than the absolute and eternal.” It is also quest of a being for

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10. *An Idealist View Of Life*, p. 88.



the limitless totality of his essence and reality—a search to discover all ideal potentialities of human existence—an attempt for emancipation from the trammels of senses and the finite. It is the conquest of fear of all kinds—it is the bravery of immortality. When an aspiring soul crosses the borderland of the theoretical philosophy and intellectual cogitation, of reason and sense, and enters the realm of living experiences of the supreme spirit religion begins. When he actually enters into spiritual relationship with God, when his soul ascends the scale of being to commune and converse with the Unseen, he realises the essence of true religion. Radhakrishnan says—"The sense of the infinite is the basis of religion.....Its roots lie in the spirit of man, deeper than feeling, will or intellect."<sup>11</sup>

The sense of the eternal is the perpetual heritage of man. In the tranquil solitude of his being he realises the reality and presence of his infinity; in the silence of loneliness, in the ambient calmness of profound stillness the small voices of eternity ring in his ears. The aspirant realises that he is in reality not the bond-slave of this earth but the immortal son of another shining realm beyond. He feels that the true meaning and the fulfilment of his being cannot be found in this world by this temporal and historical process in space and time. He feels that he has a reality that transcends all phenomena. And out of these feelings a unique aspiration is born to regain the basic infinity of self and religion is this aspiration of man to regain his original Godhood. Thus religion is based on the irrevocable conviction that there is another region beyond this visible universe of space and time and causation. It springs from the divine discontent of man with

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11. My Search For Truth, pp.10-11.



his finiteness and limitation. In the language of Radhakrishnan religion springs from the "dissatisfaction of the finite for finiteness." He is of opinion that all religions of the world have come into being in the solitude of profound meditation. He says—"The soul in solitude is the birth-place of religion."<sup>12</sup> From such great souls in solitude, he holds, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and other religions have come into existence.

Religion, therefore, is co-existent with man; man and religion move hand in hand down the ages from time immemorial. The very spirit of man which is inseparable attribute of inner self is the essential source of religion and its aspiration. The need of religion is made absolute by the conflict of the divine and non-divine in man. This dualism is the birth-place of religion.

### III

Radhakrishnan is of opinion that the forms of religion differ and they are subject to change and variation. The forms of it are neither infallible nor perfect because they are the imperfect instruments of humanity in the quest of infinity. He thinks that the standard forms of religion may not be fully satisfying. That is why the modern man is often dissatisfied with the rigid tenets of these religions though the need for religion is enduring. He maintains that all religions of the world can be broadly divided into two schools. One school of religion gives emphasis on the object of worship and obedience and the other school insists on the essential need of experience in the realm of religion. He says—"For the first class religion is an attitude of faith and conduct directed to a power without. For

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12. Eastern Religion & Western Thought, p. 53.



the second class it is an experience to which the individual attaches supreme value".<sup>13</sup> The aim of religion is salvation; hence it involves experience. Religion is a transforming process of experience and not a mere idea of God. Radhakrishnan holds that true religion can exist and flourish without any clearcut definition or conception of God but it must have to distinguish between the spiritual and the profane because such distinction is valuable to the experience which is the very life of such religion. In other words, true religion is practical and concerned with immediate process of transformation leading to realisation of the supreme Goal.

Religion is often identified with sensation and emotion, feeling and sentiment, instinct and cult, ritual and perception, faith and belief. He is of opinion that this view may be right in what it affirms though it may be wrong in what it denies. He means that affirmation of any type may contain some element of truth but denial in any form would put limit to wide, universal concept of true religion. Here it is necessary to remember that what is the true essence of religion and what are its by-products and indirect results. The predominant note of religion is experience and feeling. And religious feeling or experience must necessarily be different from sensual feeling or experience of ordinary world. Religious experience is not a mere sensation arising out of the connection of senses with the mundane objects. Therefore, true religious experience has its basic characteristics. Radhakrishnan observes that religious consciousness is a distinct mode of consciousness which is different from perceptual, imaginative and intellectual consciousness. Therefore, religious

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13. Eastern Religion & Western Thought, p. 21.



experience or consciousness is bound to have its own special criteria and here we seem to be touched with reality other than that of life, matter or surface-consciousness.

Firstly, religious experience has in it a unifying element which tends to unify the subject and object into a unitive culmination. In this spiritual experience the seer and the seen are united and all distinctions of ordinary sensations are removed. Secondly, during that state of unique consciousness separate feelings and ideas, percepts and concepts melt into one another by the presence of the overwhelming reality of the Unseen. Then, all boundaries are broken down and all mundane differences and particulars are transcended. Then, the consciousness and the being are identified in the realisation of the timeless beness. Through the realisation of unity of consciousness and being, thought and reality, the aspirant regains his soul's profound sense of freedom and fullness and "the distinction of the knower and the known disappears." Thirdly, the individual feels that he is no longer a tiny, limited person of the earth but is the universal self of the supreme Godhead. In other words, the individual self gives way to the universal self which the former realises to be his own essence once and for all. In this experience the identity between the two is firmly established. Fourthly, religious experience is self-sufficient and self-valid and complete in itself. It is an autonomous type of spiritual life and not mere intellectual, moral or aesthetic activity or experience. It is its own standard and reward; it is independent, full and absolute in its function and expression depending on none. Fifthly, the tension of normal life disappears when such experience takes place; all conflicts that characterise ordinary human existence give way to spiritual equilibrium, inner peace, power and bliss. Sixthly, true religious experience has in



it the unquestionable element of certitude—it is so very real and vivid that we can hardly question its validity. It produces tangible, psychological and other phenomena and results; the experience transforms the subject visibly. Yet the content of such experience cannot be exactly and fully translated into effective expression through the medium of language or intellectual apprehension. For to have seen that vision is reason no longer. So all true religious experiences are indescribable. They possess the elements of enigma, ineffability and inexplicability.

Lastly, all religious experiences are naturally and essentially short-lived and it is generally understood that they occur at certain intervals. And so long as the experience lasts the aspirant remains rapt in blissful communion. Such experience is short-lived because the aspirant is again swept away from the divine state by the restless flux of life—by the raging tempest of worldly things that sedulously swirl around him. Speaking about the ineffability of such experience Radhakrishnan says—"The unquestionable content of the experience is that about which nothing more can be said.....conceptual substitutes for ineffable experiences are not adequate".<sup>14</sup> He is of opinion that experience is the soul of religion because a theoretical theology or religion without the life-giving experience becomes effete and loses its cogency and practical efficiency. It then ceases to be practical and serviceable in the life of man.

#### IV

Radhakrishna's concept of religion is dominated by his philosophy of intuition. He maintains that religion is based

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14. Ibid, p. 96.



on intuitive experience. Speaking about intuition he says—"Intuition is not a-logical but supra-logical. It is the wisdom gained by the whole spirit".<sup>15</sup> He maintains that mainly there are three ways of knowing, sense-experience, discursive reasoning and intuitive apprehension. The knowledge which is derived from sense-experience and discursive reason is received indirectly through the media of precepts and symbols, senses and sense-organs. Hence this type of secondhand knowledge is incomplete and fragmentary, partial and imperfect. It presupposes the distinction between the knower and the known. Therefore, we can merely have an idea of God or reality by this kind of knowledge and it is not enough. So intuitive apprehension is most effective in the realm of religion whose sole aim is to transform man who is potentially divine into God. In intuition the dualism of ordinary knowledge is overcome. Radhakrishnan says—"Knowing a thing and being it are different". Intuition is the direct insight into the nature of reality—the direct vision of the real and its apprehension. It symbolises the knowledge par-excellence; it is the awareness of God by inclusive identity. He observes—"We become one with the truth, one with the object of knowledge. The object is seen not as an object outside the self, but as a part of the self".<sup>16</sup>

The intuitive knowledge arises from a vivid unity of soul with reality—from the direct participation of mind in reality. The knowledge of self springs from such act of intuition; we do not know the self as a separate object as we know a table or a chair; we know the self by our self-experience. That is why Radhakrishnan observes that self-knowledge is inseparable from self-existence. Intui-

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15. Ibid, p. 147.

16. Ibid, p. 138.



tion does not signify any idea but a state of rare and unique consciousness. He maintains that the deepest things of life are known through intuition. In this knowledge there is a certainty—an element of ineffable comprehension which is not easily translated into logical or intellectual definition. All religions owe their origin to the intuitive insight of their prophet-founders. It is all—comprehending covering the whole life.

Intuition is different from imagination because it produces tangible results and consequences of far-reaching significance and value in the life of religious person. Intuition is not a figment of fancy or imagination or make-believe. In the language of Radhakrishnan it is a "bona fide discovery of reality." It is also different from intellect but it is not anti-thesis of it. Intellect is practical and servicable in life; it is an instrument and part of the self; while intuition is the instrument of the entire personality and it is true. But it is not useful in practical and mundane affairs of life. Intuition is different from intellect as the intellect is different from the senses. And intuition though extends beyond intellect is not contrary to it. It is a perfect knowledge which follows reflection arising out of intellectual cogitation. There is no mystifying element in it—no vagueness of any kind. It is neither used as an apology for doctrines which will not stand the onslaught of reason and scrutiny, nor it is used as a shadowy sentiment of religious fanatics. Intellect and intuition are vitally connected with each other; intuition can ignore intellect at its own great disadvantage. Hence intuition is beyond intellect but is not against it or anti-thesis of it.

Therefore, intellect, emotion, will, feeling are united, strengthened and purified by the unifying vision and truth of intuition; they all spring from the one and the same



spiritual source of all. In religion intuition is the great instrument of transformation; it unites man with man, man with spirit, consequently man with God Himself. It gives the stamp of reality and vivid certainty to religion and religious experience; it reveals the entire self—the profound depth of human soul and establishes the identity of man and God. Hence the basis of all true religion is intuition through which the full flowering of spiritual personality and its harmonious development take place.

Therefore, the first pre-condition of true religion is that it must be based on the strong foundations of intuitive apprehension of the transcendent reality. Secondly, the marks of true religion are freedom (abhyasa) and love (ahimsa), the proper balance of body and soul. Freedom also includes freedom from fear; freedom makes for harmony, balance and perfect agreement between flesh and soul. Love includes the love for all irrespective of race or clime, caste or creed. In fact, Radhakrishnan observes, that religion begins to function only when the aspirant realises that he is not for himself but for the good of the whole world. Religion must end and overcome the conflict between self and not-self. Thirdly, religion is an act of self-discovery. Radhakrishnan equates self-discovery with self-knowledge and self-fulfilment which are the highest destiny of man. The self-discovery is also the discovery of God Who is the Self of man. Fourthly, religion is not passive but combative as he calls it. Spiritual life is not a retreat from men and things of the world but it is a consuming fire that burns away egotism and bondage, and penetrates everywhere to uplift, unify and deify all. Religion is practical if not anything. So it should not be confused with the realm of abstract philosophy or confined to it. It must be co-existent with the practical life.



of man on this earth; it must be alive to man's problems and ills, puzzles and difficulties. It should guide man in times of misfortune and helplessness and show him the goal and help him to reach his supreme destination, namely God-realisation. The aim of religion is to restore the lost relation of man with the eternal. Fifthly, it should harmonise man's life spontaneously with thought, unify conduct and aspiration, will and feeling with the divine will and mission. Religion alone can give us "the highest, that man can possess, constant contact with the creative principle of which life is the manifestation, coincidence with the divine will, serene calm, inward peace".<sup>17</sup> Sixthly, genuine religion should not be confused with or mixed up with secular interests, state-crafts or racial or political motives, prejudices and limitations. In the past such confusion had worked for the downfall of religion. When religion is vitiated by secular, selfish and mundane factors it loses its force and efficacy and becomes a subservient instrument of the state and other degrading powers.

Radhakrishnan observes that the failure of the standard religions to promote human welfare—to strike a balance between the spiritual and mundane aspirations of the people urgently calls for a radical reform in the domain of religion. Though the world situation is gloomy from religious point of view we need not be disappointed because the present unrest is only a prelude to great spiritual awakening of the nations. He maintains that mankind is still in the making and undreamt of fullness, glory, freedom and bliss await humanity if only humanity goes forward with high resolve and firm conviction to establish a kingdom of spirit on earth. He says that we need not only plans and pro-

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17. *Eastern Religion & Western Thought*, p. 275.



grammes but also the spiritual renewal and energy born of religion to organise the universe by controlling passions and selfishness. The next state of evolution is not in man's physique but in his psyche, in his mind and spirit. Religion should train a new generation in the ideals of the supremacy of the spirit, spiritual life and brotherhood of man. The aim of religion is the identification of man with the current of life and his constant participation in its creative, everlasting advance. So religion may be defined as a dynamic process—a renewal of effort of the creative impulse which is working through great individuals seeking to uplift mankind to a new level.

But the revival of old, dogmatic religion cannot help because gone are the days of ceremonial religion; we must remove from the fair face of true religion the deceitful paganism once and for all. Today man is not satisfied with mere externals of religion—with outward show and splendour of formalism and dogmatism. Now man is asking for reality in religion.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the need of modern age can only be satisfied by a religion "of the spirit which will give purpose to life, which will not demand any evasion or ambiguity, which will reconcile the ideal and the real, the poetry and prose of life, which will speak to the profound realities of our nature and satisfy the whole of our being, our critical intelligence and our active desire".<sup>19</sup> The present unrest is partly due to the moral ineffectiveness of religion—its failure to promote the best life. Radhakrishnan firmly believes that true religion must express itself in secular advancement and material activities for the good of all in well-organised forms of society and civilisation. Every civilisation is the expression of religion because

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18. *My Search For Truth*, p. 26.

19. *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, p. 266.



religion signifies faith in values and spiritual way of life. So in one sense, religion is a dynamic of social advance. Yet its spiritual content must be kept in view always. Radhakrishnan prefers a spiritual and undogmatic view of religion.

We must remember that religion is solely concerned with man. Religion is based on the discovery of the essential worth and dignity of the individual and his relation to a higher world of reality. Religion on empirical level consists in doing justice and loving mercy and in making all fellow creatures on earth happy. Religion and humanism are not mutually contradictory but they are essentially organic to each other. Humanism rests on the realisation that all people are vitally related and their aims and aspirations are identical. This realisation can only spring from the religious conviction that every being is divine and all beings are the manifestations of God. So religion gives certainty and universal standard to ethics and new significance to life because it reveals the glorious and the highest destiny of mankind as its supreme goal. The spiritual values should, therefore, permeate the entire world of life. To make religion triumphant and effective we need the regeneration of faith in all permanent spiritual values. This is the deepest need of our times. Radhakrishnan writes—"Only religion which demands as its first principle the individual change, the substitution of the divine for the dark image in the soul, can create that new heart in the peoples, can give them the courage and the faith to be consistent....."<sup>20</sup> ..... "what we need today is a religion of freedom, which stimulates faith not fear, spontaneity not

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20. Eastern Religion & Western Thought, p. 114.



formalism, abundant life not the monotony of the mechanical".<sup>21</sup>

Yet religion must have an element of asceticism to guard it against degeneration and moral weakness. True religion is rational and not vague or ambiguous—it is concrete and personal in its experience. He says—"If the lost 'soul' is to be restored to human life, a new vital religion which does not require us to surrender the rights of reason, which even wholly free and disillusioned spirits can adopt, must be developed".<sup>22</sup> And true religion is not hindrance to the creative activity of man; joy, self-respect, creative ability of man go hand in hand with it. It helps man to overcome greed, lust, hatred, evil so that the divinity in man may manifest itself.<sup>23</sup> Religion is called upon to reconstruct the very foundations of our moral, spiritual, political, social and economic convictions and ways—so that it can create and evolve new system of life which everyone can follow with freedom and happiness.

Radhakrishnan deprecates the tendency of over-emphasis on the other-worldliness in religion though he never loses sight of the fact that sensual world is not the supreme reality—that the destiny of man can only reach consummation in God-realisation beyond all phenomena. Religion is in this sense a reality of the highest order because it is concerned with "what is actually environing us and penetrating us," and we are saved if we can recognise the presence and influence of this ambient divinity and harmonise ourselves with it. Radhakrishnan observes that through action religion fulfils its destiny. Hence he says—"It is the

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21. Ibid, p. 45.

22. My Search For Truth, p. 27.

23. Religion And Society, p. 42.



aim of religion to lift us from our momentary meaningless provincialism to the significance and status of the eternal".<sup>24</sup> The human beings today must be aware of the fact that they are the children of immortality—they are originally and potentially eternal and divine. But they have been momentarily captivated by the trammels of earthly bondage; by the chaos of aimless conditions they have been made conditional beings of the finitude. It is the aim of religion to proclaim and reveal the basic eternity and sovereignty of man who is nothing but the conditioned Godhood in the trammels of captivity. In other words, the total transformation of man into the consciousness of his divinity is the purpose of religion. It reconciles the opposing urges of the self and on the phenomenal plane it combines the love for all with creative freedom of the individuals.

Radhakrishnan holds that all individuals are destined to attain the life eternal. The historical process unfolds the process of universal salvation; the end of historical movement is this fulfilment when man transcends the temporal process. He says—".....we must reach perfection at some point of historical process, and that would be the transcending of our historical individuality—of our escape from birth and death...."<sup>24</sup> He writes—"The end of man is to let the spirit in him permeate his whole being, his soul, flesh and affection".<sup>25</sup> That is, religion must help us to conquer our own nature. We have mastered all save the ragings of our passion and flesh—the tumult of our desires and senses. So long as we remain the victim of the cravings of flesh all our achievement and discoveries, powers and riches, culture and civilisation are ineffective, meaningless and valueless. Herein is the greatest need of religion

24. The Hindu View Of Life, p. 63.

25. My Search For Truth, p. 30.



—key to all success lies in mastering our own selves. But is it not the suppression of flesh but the restraint of it to sublimate the human energy and aspiration for the fulfilment and manifestation of man's divine destiny. So the harmonious development of the spirit in man in true sense of the term is the ideal of religious perfection. Religion generally begins with individuals but it must end in common fellowship of all mankind. The conflict in man of the divine and non-divine is overcome by religion; religion overcomes it not by the method of suppression but by integrating the personality properly and spontaneously.

But how one can reach the goal of religion and one's highest fulfilment in God-realisation? The aspirant attains spiritual illumination through steady adherence to ethical and moral life and cultivation of the art of meditation in profound solitude. Radhakrishnan observes that the aim of religion is the vision of God while the aim of ethics is to remark human life "into the mould of the unseen". There are three stages in the evolutionary process leading to salvation, namely purification, concentration and identification. Moreover, there is necessity of prayer and worship, meditation and contemplation as well as of art, philosophy and literature to revive in us the reality of the spirit. The way to salvation is through the increasing process of impersonalisation of self by uniting the individual self with the universal self.

The great seers down the ages have been firm believers in individualistic religion and they have strongly advocated the elements of freedom and spontaneity".<sup>26</sup> Thus they have placed the value of true religion above dogmatic and rigid ethics and theology, scriptural authority and inveterate

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26. An Idealist View Of Life, p. 120.



rules and customs. The great realised souls have always discarded the media of laws and formality, dogma and ritual in the endeavour for God-realisation. They have directly approached God and attained illumination by direct method. He says—"Religious men of all ages have their certainty of God through this direct way of approach to the apprehension of reality".<sup>27</sup> He maintains that main characteristics of realised souls are "unshakable faith in the supremacy of spirit, invincible optimism, ethical universalism and religious toleration".<sup>28</sup> So the main function of religion is to affirm the efficacy of intuitive life and the basic solidarity of human nature which is universal and everywhere the same. Today's religion must be the symbol of universal values and transcendent principles of life, which can be applicable to the whole human race. The universal values can only form the basis of human unity the world over.

## V

Radhakrishnan advocates the doctrine of absolute monism or idealism. His absolute idealism is different from subjective idealism which holds that the external world has no objective existence of its own without a seeing or perceiving mind. Subjective idealism preaches that mind or soul is the only reality and the creation is nothing but the projection of it in space and time. Radhakrishnan's philosophy is closely akin to the Vedantic philosophy of monism though there is certain difference of approach and emphasis between the two schools of philosophy. Let me outline in short Radhakrishnan's concept of God or the Absolute.

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27. Ibid, p. 125.

28. Ibid, p. 126.



He visualises God or the Absolute as the eternal source of dynamic manifestations and manifold possibilities. The historical process, he maintains, only unfolds one specific possibility of the Infinite Spirit which is also envisioned by him as the conscious guiding principle of this historical movement. Creation is materialising one possibility out of infinite possibilities of God. He holds that it is wrong to say that God created the universe because His creative flow is unceasing and evolving the factors of creation constantly. God is creating here and now for all times to come. In other words, He is ever creating and the process of creation is perpetually on the march. History in this perspective is the manifestation of Divine will which is operating and expressing itself through the earthly medium. When we visualise the Absolute from the human stand-point the infinite Absolute is God Who is friend, judge, and saviour of mankind. The Absolute works through this formal aspect in the cosmic process.

The Absolute has limitless possibilities one of which is actualising itself through this creative movement in historical form. Speaking about God Radhakrishnan says—“God is the real symbol of the Absolute Reality—an aspect of the Absolute in its relation to this specific possibility which is being actualised”.<sup>29</sup> God is not, therefore, a perverted shadow or reflection of the Absolute but a phenomenon, if He can be called so, “well-founded in the reality”. Explaining the point he writes—“We call the Supreme the Absolute, when we view it apart from the cosmos, God in relation to the cosmos. The Absolute is the pre-cosmic nature of God, and God is the Absolute from the cosmic point of view”.<sup>30</sup> The above quotation definitely calls for

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29. *My Search For Truth*, p. 32.

30. *An Idealist View Of Life*, p. 345.



no explanation because it is quite clear and lucid in its meaning. Here his views on God are definitely Vedantic in trend, in temper and content.

The Absolute through God is working out a divine purpose. Creation is not fortuitous but teleological; it has a divine mission which is being gradually fulfilled by the will of God. The aim of the historical process is to establish complete concord between God and the universe. And this is only possible through the achievement of the universal salvation of all. It signifies the complete identity between God and the world and the fulfilment of God's purpose so far as the creation as a whole is concerned. It also signifies the complete perfection of all individual spirits. And when this supreme mission is attained it will not be necessary then for the Absolute to maintain the formal aspect of it in the form of Godhead. Then, God Himself, in the language of Radhakrishnan "will relapse into the Absolute, creation being thus atonce ransomed and annulled by the cessation of the impulse to individuate".<sup>31</sup> The consummation of the creation will usher in the identity of all with the Absolute; so the formal aspect of it in the being of God Whose presence is necessary to establish the Absolute's relation to cosmos, is annulled. Radhakrishnan in this way seeks to solve the problem of relation between the Absolute and God of religious experience. The Times Literary Supplement, dated May 3, 1934 puts his solution in a nutshell thus—"Radhakrishnan suggests a solution of the problem which is, in essentials, derived from Indian idealism, endorsing the hypotheses of pre-existence and palingenesis, and envisaging a consummation wherein, all spirits being perfected at last and set free from the cycle of Karma, the

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31. My Search For Truth, p. 32.



purpose of God will be achieved and God Himself will relapse into the Absolute, creation being thus atonce ransomed and annulled by the cessation of the impulse to individuate". And religion is working out this mission and will of the Absolute.

Therefore, the Absolute is both immanent and transcendent, dynamic and tranquil, temporal and timeless, precosmic and cosmic, impersonal and personal. Radhakrishnan concludes thus—"What we need today is a profound change in man's way of life. This self-change is not automatic. It is the response to the meaningful pattern we discern in history. It is a submission of the self to reality. It is the practice of religion".<sup>32</sup>

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